We created this document with two ideas in mind: AI is undoubtedly now embedded in most parts of everyday life ("here to stay") and, in light of that, undisclosed AI usage holds no space in fandom. We believe readers deserve to make informed choices about the type of art they would like to engage with. In an ideal fandom space, AI usage to assist or generate fanworks would be disclosed up front.

However, undeniable proof of AI (Claude-generated) content is attached to the HTML of some works and can be found hidden in a number of well-known fanfics on Archive of Our Own, inside and outside the *Heated Rivalry* community.

A few necessary disclaimers here:

- The end goal is, and will always be, transparency.
- We do not condone targeted harassment, bullying and ostracization. Some of the authors in this document are writers we admired and, in some cases, considered friends. Some loudly opposed AI and encouraged friends and readers to rally against it publicly, only to use it under everyone's nose.
- **Nobody mentioned in this document should be villainized.** It is a human prerogative to make mistakes, be loud and wrong, and then do better.
- We are not asking for any works to be privated or taken down (AO3 does not, in fact, have an anti-AI policy). Instead, **we are asking that they be appropriately tagged** so that individuals can make informed choices on what they're supporting via reading, kudos, bookmarks, fic recs, video edits, fan art, and so on.

The absence of this particular Claude-generated HTML code in a fanfiction does not necessarily mean that the work is human. These examples are purely cases in which, whether due to inattention or hastiness, the original Claude formatting was copied and pasted directly into AO3's text editor without the filtering of writing platform tools (Google Docs, Pages, Word, etc.) or otherwise being removed by the user.

We are fans of *Heated Rivalry*, a TV show whose rapid popularity "surprised even TV executives"[1] and continues, arguably, to grow. This is the main reason why this document focuses on fanfics within that specific tag. This does not by any means suggest that the issue is limited to this specific fandom. A cursory search was enough to find similar Claude coding in other tags, including Stranger Things, The Pitt, and Pluribus.

If you're wondering, *Why do you care?*

---

[1] John Koblin, *Popularity of 'Heated Rivalry' Has Surprised Even TV Executives*, The New York Times (12 January 2026), https://archive.ph/HUBml.

Fandom is supposed to be fun. It’s supposed to create, connect, transform and subvert. There is a fundamental human nature to it from which it can’t (and shouldn’t, for that matter) be separated from and that is at the core of fanfic, too, as part of its ultimate goal.

Undisclosed AI use harms human authors and fandom as a whole. It preys on people's insecurities—not writing fast enough or with enough polish, for instance—and contributes to the widespread pressure to produce, a lot and quickly, rather than create earnestly and joyfully.

On a wider note:

According to the United Nations Environment Programme, whilst the technology *is* being used to help address environmental emergencies, it is also at the epicentre of serious concerns regarding data centres’ electronic waste, indirect gas emissions and consumption of drinkable water, as well as their dependence on unsustainably-sourced minerals.[2]

Additionally, companies everywhere are cutting thousands of jobs in favor of “AI efficiencies” (“*Silicon Valley’s AI jobs purge is a warning for the world,*” The Telegraph, 29th June 2026). Companies are also pushing AI utilisation within their employees, scrutinized and assessed as part of performance reviews (“*Big companies are turning AI into a scoreboard—and everyone’s being ranked*,” Business Insider, 29th June 2026).

This is what we’re looking at. However, back to the question at hand:

GenAI can do things well and quickly, and it is capable of producing writing that is superficially smooth and digestible. But fanfiction, like any other creative expression, should remain emotional, flawed, and irredeemably human. The proliferation of undisclosed AI in creative spaces limits opportunities for human expression, whether in writing or other mediums, to shine through.

As it becomes increasingly difficult to opt out of AI in our day-to-day lives, we fans should have the opportunity to decide for ourselves whether they want AI in our fan spaces.

This is the crux of it: the choice to interact with AI in fandom should ultimately be ours. And we should be able to make that choice with as much information—*truthful* information—as possible.

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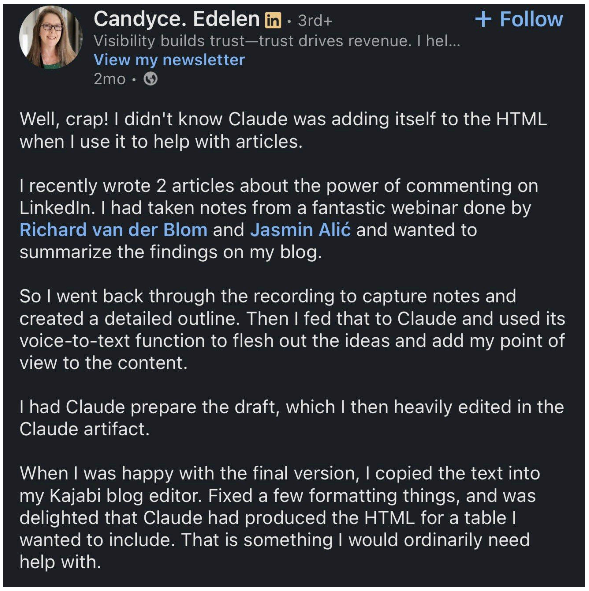
[2] UN Environment Programme, *AI has an environmental problem. Here’s what the world can do about that*, Environment Under Review (21 September 2024), www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/ai-has-environmental-problem-heres-what-world-can-do-about.

Claude Output Code on Ao3

We created this document to compile our research on a potential indicator of generative artificial intelligence (hereinafter referred to as "AI") usage found in the HTML source code of works published on AO3. The indicator is a fragment of code that appears in the rich text editor in AO3 when copied straight from Claude's LLM's output: "`font-claude-response-body`". A Claude user explained her experience in a post on LinkedIn, stating that after preparing a draft using Claude, she copied it into her blog editor and had to make sure to clean the "`font-claude-response-body`" tags from the text:



Candyce. Edelen · 3rd+ + Follow
Visibility builds trust—trust drives revenue. I hel...
View my newsletter
2mo ·

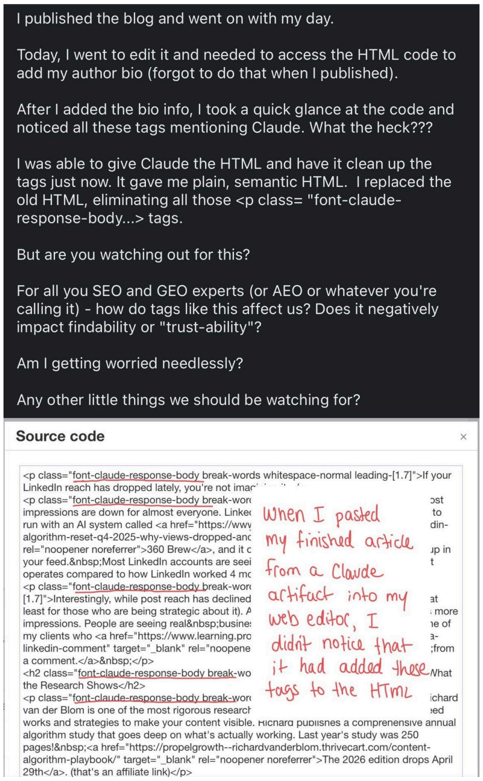
Well, crap! I didn't know Claude was adding itself to the HTML when I use it to help with articles.

I recently wrote 2 articles about the power of commenting on LinkedIn. I had taken notes from a fantastic webinar done by **Richard van der Blom** and **Jasmin Alić** and wanted to summarize the findings on my blog.

So I went back through the recording to capture notes and created a detailed outline. Then I fed that to Claude and used its voice-to-text function to flesh out the ideas and add my point of view to the content.

I had Claude prepare the draft, which I then heavily edited in the Claude artifact.

When I was happy with the final version, I copied the text into my Kajabi blog editor. Fixed a few formatting things, and was delighted that Claude had produced the HTML for a table I wanted to include. That is something I would ordinarily need help with.



I published the blog and went on with my day.

Today, I went to edit it and needed to access the HTML code to add my author bio (forgot to do that when I published).

After I added the bio info, I took a quick glance at the code and noticed all these tags mentioning Claude. What the heck???

I was able to give Claude the HTML and have it clean up the tags just now. It gave me plain, semantic HTML. I replaced the old HTML, eliminating all those <p class= "font-claude-response-body...> tags.

But are you watching out for this?

For all you SEO and GEO experts (or AEO or whatever you're calling it) - how do tags like this affect us? Does it negatively impact findability or "trust-ability"?

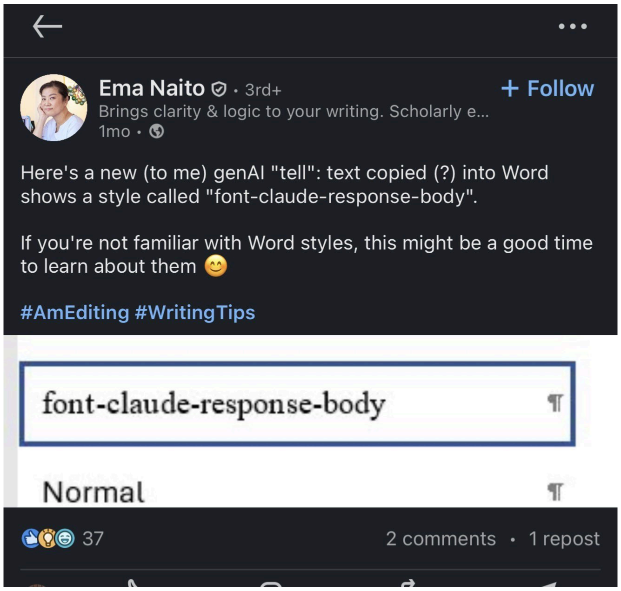
Am I getting worried needlessly?

Any other little things we should be watching for?

Source code ×

```
<p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal leading-[1.7]">If your
LinkedIn reach has dropped lately, you're not imag
<p class="font-claude-response-body break-wor                                  ost
impressions are down for almost everyone. Linke                                to
run with an AI system called <a href="https://www                              din-
algorithm-reset-q4-2025-why-views-dropped-anc
rel="noopener noreferrer">360 Brew</a>, and it c                               up in
your feed.&nbsp;Most LinkedIn accounts are seei                                t
operates compared to how LinkedIn worked 4 mc
<p class="font-claude-response-body break-wor
[1.7]">Interestingly, while post reach has declined                            at
least for those who are being strategic about it). A                           more
impressions. People are seeing real&nbsp;busine                                ne of
my clients who <a href="https://www.learning.pro                               a-
linkedin-comment" target="_blank" rel="noopene                                 ;from
a comment.</a>&nbsp;</p>
<h2 class="font-claude-response-body break-wo                                  What
the Research Shows</h2>
<p class="font-claude-response-body break-wor                                  ichard
van der Blom is one of the most rigorous researcl                              ed
works and strategies to make your content visible. Richard publishes a comprehensive annual
algorithm study that goes deep on what's actually working. Last year's study was 250
pages!&nbsp;<a href="https://propelgrowth--richardvanderblom.thrivecart.com/content-
algorithm-playbook/" target="_blank" rel="noopener noreferrer">The 2026 edition drops April
29th</a>. (that's an affiliate link)</p>
```

When I pasted my finished article from a Claude artifact into my web editor, I didn't notice that it had added these tags to the HTML



Ema Naito · 3rd+ + Follow
Brings clarity & logic to your writing. Scholarly e...
1mo ·

Here's a new (to me) genAI "tell": text copied (?) into Word shows a style called "font-claude-response-body".

If you're not familiar with Word styles, this might be a good time to learn about them 😊

#AmEditing #WritingTips

font-claude-response-body ¶

Normal ¶

37 2 comments · 1 repost

← This is not an isolated incident; for example, another user on LinkedIn noted that the same fragment of code appears when copying Claude-generated text into Word.

Methods and Materials

To access the source code of a fic on Ao3:

1. View the page's source code
    a. Desktop: within your browser window, Ctrl+U (Windows) or ⌘-Option-U (Mac)
        - Chrome: Right click→"Inspect" *or* right click→"View Source" (You can also go to the "three dots" menu at the top right of your browser window, click "More Tools," then "Developer Tools")
        - Firefox: Go to the "three lines" menu on the top right of your browser window, click "More Tools," then "Page Source"
    b. Mobile: when on the fic, edit the url and add "view-source:" before https://. Example: view-source:https://archiveofourown.org/works/123456789
2. Ctrl+F / Cmnd+F "claude"
    - Look for "**`font-claude-response-body`**"

The skin only works on a chapter-by-chapter basis; it is therefore best used with the "Entire Work" view.

To automatically determine whether the code fragment exists in a fic, we coded the following skin, which makes the AO3 screen a bright red color if **`font-claude-response-body`** is present.

```
#outer,
#main,
.userstuff,
.userstuff p,
.userstuff div {
     background: #ffffff !important;
     color: #000000 !important;
}
body:has(.userstuff p.font-claude-response-body) #outer,
body:has(.userstuff p.font-claude-response-body) #main,
body:has(.userstuff p.font-claude-response-body) .userstuff,
body:has(.userstuff p.font-claude-response-body) .userstuff p,
body:has(.userstuff p.font-claude-response-body) .userstuff div {
     background: #ff0000 !important;
     color: #ffffff !important;
}
```

We then tested the siteskin on works where we had already located the **`font-claude-response-body`** artifact by manually checking the HTML source code. We invite you to test the siteskin for yourself, which you can do by creating a new siteskin on AO3 and pasting this into the body of the text. This siteskin and the searching function described above do not rely on generative AI. These are simple searches of the HTML source code of publicly available AO3 works.

After filtering the "Game Changers | Heated Rivalry - All Media Types" tag, as well as other popular fandom tags (such as "Off Campus," "The Pitt," "Stranger Things (TV 2016)" and "Pluribus (2025)") by either Word Count or by Most Recent, we viewed the source code for every fic on each tag's first page. We then focused on the *Heated Rivalry* tag, expanding the search to almost every work over 1000 kudos and rumoured AI-assisted fics. Our research led us to the following conclusion:

When text is copied ***directly*** from Claude into AO3's editor, these formatting artifacts persist, and when viewing the source code of the fic on AO3, any reader can see the artifacts. Below are examples from other fandoms that demonstrate the *Heated Rivalry* AO3 tag is not the only fandom tag where the fragment of code exists:

- https://archiveofourown.org/works/78596761?view_full_work=true (Pluribus, "The Second Take" by oceansidedrive, 236 Claude artifacts as of 6/28/26)
- https://archiveofourown.org/works/84947271/chapters/224243531 (Off-Campus, "Dirty Little Secret" by SignoraScuderia, 12 Claude artifacts as of 6/29/26)
- https://archiveofourown.org/works/79261491?view_full_work=true (Stranger Things, "Super Soaker" by wheezingwheeler, 532 Claude artifacts as of 6/28/26)
- https://archiveofourown.org/works/81457401?view_full_work=true (The Pitt, "The Wound (is the place where the light enters you)" by lieutenanttrouble, 9 Claude artifacts as of 6/29/26)

In our appendix are works on AO3 we have discovered that contain the Claude fragment, sorted alphabetically by username. For some authors, the fragment appears throughout multiple works. The screenshots are our findings as of June 29, 2026.

The existence of the foregoing code fragments is proof of AI / Claude usage for specific sentences and paragraphs; these fragments do not prove that a writer used AI to create the entire work. The absence of this code, whether in the remainder of the fic in question and/or in other works, **is not indicative** of a lack of AI usage.

The presence of this code is a positive indicator, not a negative. It is plausible (and perhaps more likely) that many AI users copy and paste their Claude outputs into a text editor (Word, Google Docs, Notes, etc.) before pasting into AO3 or remove these artifacts through other means. It is also possible that other LLM outputs contain other indicators of AI usage not discussed here.

In addition, numerous users have admitted to usage of AI or left AI chat outputs in posted works, revealing that they used AI tools in the creation of the works, but this code artifact was not present. Accordingly, please consider all examples here as only a specifically identifiable subset of *Heated Rivalry* fics created with the assistance of generative AI.

In this section, we have compiled our findings regarding the presence of a fragment of HTML code found in the source code for Ao3 fics indicating the use of Claude. Across various fandom tag pages (the first page of each fandom tag sorted by Word Count), we found the code fragment time and time again. We only focused on the *Heated Rivalry* fandom tag because of our mutual interest in the *Heated Rivalry* fanfiction community.

Though we concede that we haven't undertaken statistical analysis, our findings indicate that Claude use in fanfiction uploaded to Ao3 is becoming commonplace. Further research is encouraged to uncover the particular code fragments left in by Gemini, ChatGPT, Grok, and other LLMs, to the extent they exist and persist when copied into AO3's editor. We also welcome peer review by third parties for accuracy and other discoveries.

Our intention is not to create an environment of mistrust or accuse particular users; after discovering the code fragment and its possible presence in AO3 fics, we proceeded with the above study to investigate the phenomenon as objectively as we could. Thank you for reading.

If you are someone who has used Claude or another LLM to write your fanfiction, we respectfully ask that you tag your work as "AI assisted" or "AI generated."

So what comes next?

We have compiled the facts as best we could and as comprehensively as we could within the time we had. All of this was in the interest of preserving the humanity and authenticity of fan spaces.

Do not ostracize, harass, or bully any of the people named in this document. **WE DO NOT ENDORSE THIS.**

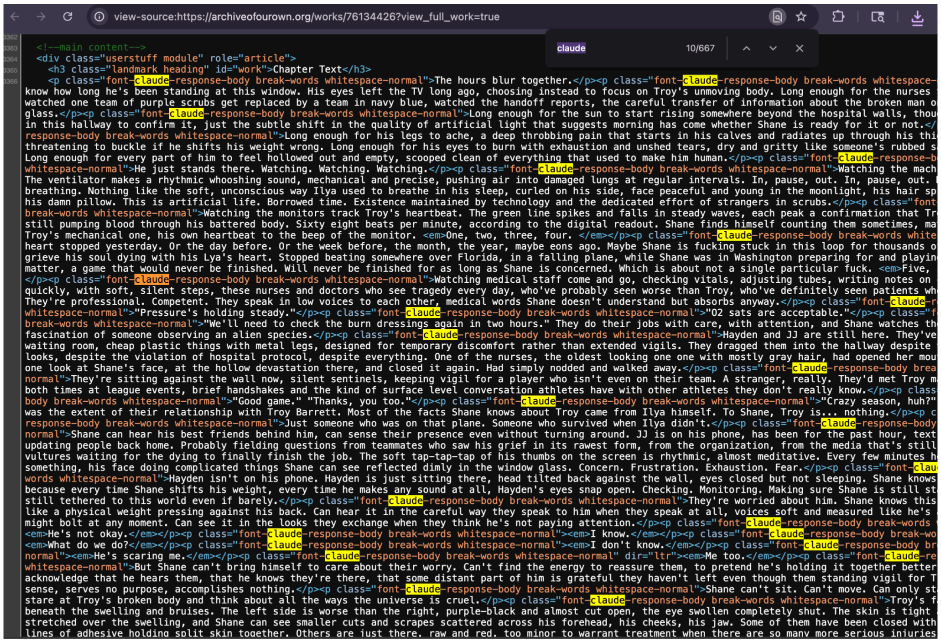
Similarly, we are **NOT** asking for the removal of any of these works from the Archive. Considering the human and environmental ethical issues around Generative AI, we are asking for the proper tagging so that all us fans can make informed decisions with as much transparency as possible.

Fandom is a uniquely connective, collaborative space. It thrives on the human element and the creative spark which drives it and feeds off it. If we unknowingly allow AI to corrupt these spaces, what will be left of them?

APPENDIX

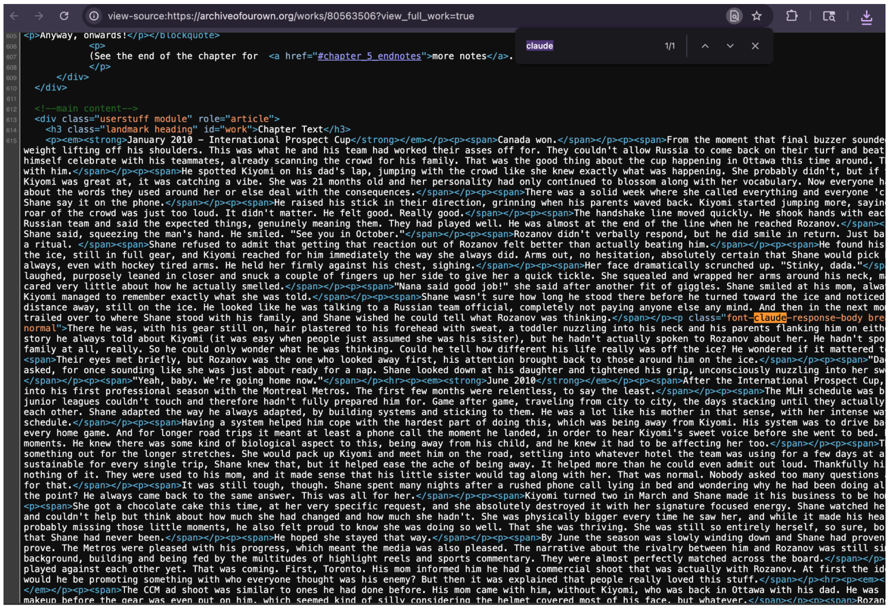
For reference: HTML/epub/PDFs of all fics listed in this document are saved here, updated as of 29 June 2026: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/136ADl_CC_n8BVHj693fnjDphDUP6gmge?usp=drive_link

Amaretta, "[Half a forever (I buried my heart with you)]"
1,256 kudos, 58,118 hits, 234,201 words (667 instances)


view-source:https://archiveofourown.org/works/76134426?view_full_work=true
claude
10/667

```
  <!--main content-->
  <div class="userstuff module" role="article">
    <h3 class="landmark heading" id="work">Chapter Text</h3>
      <p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">The hours blur together.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-
know how long he's been standing at this window. His eyes left the TV long ago, choosing instead to focus on Troy's unmoving body. Long enough for the nurses
watched one team of purple scrubs get replaced by a team in navy blue, watched the handoff reports, the careful transfer of information about the broken man o
glass.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Long enough for the sun to start rising somewhere beyond the hospital walls, thou
in this hallway to confirm it, just the subtle shift in the quality of artificial light that suggests morning has come whether Shane is ready for it or not.</
response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Long enough for his legs to ache, a deep throbbing pain that starts in his calves and radiates up through his thi
threatening to buckle if he shifts his weight wrong. Long enough for his eyes to burn with exhaustion and unshed tears, dry and gritty like someone's rubbed s
Long enough for every part of him to feel hollowed out and empty, scooped clean of everything that used to make him human.</p><p class="font-claude-response-b
whitespace-normal">He just stands there. Watching. Watching. Watching.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Watching the mach
The ventilator makes a rhythmic whooshing sound, mechanical and precise, pushing air into damaged lungs at regular intervals. In, pause, out. In, pause, out.
breathing. Nothing like the soft, unconscious way Ilya used to breathe in his sleep, curled on his side, face peaceful and young in the moonlight, his hair sp
his damn pillow. This is artificial life. Borrowed time. Existence maintained by technology and the dedicated effort of strangers in scrubs.</p><p class="font
break-words whitespace-normal">Watching the monitors track Troy's heartbeat. The green line spikes and falls in steady waves, each peak a confirmation that Tr
still pumping blood through his battered body. Sixty eight beats per minute, according to the digital readout. Shane finds himself counting them sometimes, ma
Troy's mechanical one, his own heartbeat to the beep of the monitor. <em>One, two, three, four. </em></p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words white
heart stopped yesterday. Or the day before. Or the week before, the month, the year, maybe eons ago. Maybe Shane is fucking stuck in this loop for thousands o
grieve his soul dying with his Lya's heart. Stopped beating somewhere over Florida, in a falling plane, while Shane was in Washington preparing for and playin
matter, a game that would never be finished. Will never be finished for as long as Shane is concerned. Which is about not a single particular fuck. <em>Five,
</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Watching medical staff come and go, checking vitals, adjusting tubes, writing notes on
quickly, with soft, silent steps, these nurses and doctors who see tragedy every day, who've probably seen worse than Troy, who've definitely seen patients wh
They're professional. Competent. They speak in low voices to each other, medical words Shane doesn't understand but absorbs anyway.</p><p class="font-claude-r
whitespace-normal">"Pressure's holding steady."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"02 sats are acceptable."</p><p class="f
break-words whitespace-normal">"We'll need to check the burn dressings again in two hours." They do their jobs with care, with attention, and Shane watches th
fascination of someone observing an alien species.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Hayden and JJ are still here. They've
waiting room, cheap plastic things with metal legs, designed for temporary discomfort rather than extended vigils. They dragged them into the hallway despite
looks, despite the violation of hospital protocol, despite everything. One of the nurses, the oldest looking one one with mostly gray hair, had opened her mou
one look at Shane's face, at the hollow devastation there, and closed it again. Had simply nodded and walked away.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body brea
normal">They're sitting against the wall now, silent sentinels, keeping vigil for a player who isn't even on their team. A stranger, really. They'd met Troy m
both times at league events, brief handshakes and the kind of surface level conversation athletes have with other athletes they don't really know.</p><p class
body break-words whitespace-normal">"Good game." "Thanks, you too."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Crazy season, huh?"
was the extent of their relationship with Troy Barrett. Most of the facts Shane knows about Troy came from Ilya himself. To Shane, Troy is... nothing.</p><p c
response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Just someone who was on that plane. Someone who survived when Ilya didn't.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body
normal">Shane can hear his best friends behind him, can sense their presence even without turning around. JJ is on his phone, has been for the past hour, text
updating people back home. Probably fielding questions from teammates who saw his grief in its rawest form, from the organization, from the media that's still
vultures waiting for the dying to finally finish the job. The soft tap-tap-tap of his thumbs on the screen is rhythmic, almost meditative. Every few minutes h
something, his face doing complicated things Shane can see reflected dimly in the window glass. Concern. Frustration. Exhaustion. Fear.</p><p class="font-clau
words whitespace-normal">Hayden isn't on his phone. Hayden is just sitting there, head tilted back against the wall, eyes closed but not sleeping. Shane knows
because every time Shane shifts his weight, every time he makes any sound at all, Hayden's eyes snap open. Checking. Monitoring. Making sure Shane is still st
still tethered to this world even if barely.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">They're worried about him. Shane knows this
like a physical weight pressing against his back. Can hear it in the careful way they speak to him when they speak at all, voices soft and measured like he's
might bolt at any moment. Can see it in the looks they exchange when they think he's not paying attention.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words
<em>He's not okay.</em></p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal"><em>I know.</em></p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-wo
<em>What do we do?</em></p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal"><em>I don't know.</em></p><p class="font-claude-response-body br
normal"><em>He's scaring me.</em></p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal" dir="ltr"><em>Me too.</em></p><p class="font-claude-re
whitespace-normal">But Shane can't bring himself to care about their worry. Can't find the energy to reassure them, to pretend he's holding it together better
acknowledge that he hears them, that he knows they're there, that some distant part of him is grateful they haven't left even though them standing vigil for T
sense, serves no purpose, accomplishes nothing.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane can't sit. Can't move. Can only st
stare at Troy's broken body and think about all the ways the universe is cruel.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Troy's f
beneath the swelling and bruises. The left side is worse than the right, purple-black and almost cut open, the eye swollen completely shut. The skin is tight
stretched over the swelling, and Shane can see smaller cuts and scrapes scattered across his forehead, his cheeks, his jaw. Some of them have been closed with
lines of adhesive holding split skin together. Others are just there, raw and red, too minor to warrant treatment when there are so many more serious injuries
```

atemonai, "[Offside]"
3,105 kudos, 114,244 hits, 110,917 words (1 instance)


view-source:https://archiveofourown.org/works/80563506?view_full_work=true
claude
1/1

```
<p>Anyway, onwards!</p></blockquote>
            <p>
            (See the end of the chapter for  <a href="#chapter_5_endnotes">more notes</a>.
            </p>
      </div>
  </div>

  <!--main content-->
  <div class="userstuff module" role="article">
    <h3 class="landmark heading" id="work">Chapter Text</h3>
    <p><em><strong>January 2010 - International Prospect Cup</strong></em></p><p><span>Canada won.</span></p><p><span>From the moment that final buzzer sounde
weight lifting off his shoulders. This was what he and his team had worked their asses off for. They couldn't allow Russia to come back on their turf and beat
himself celebrate with his teammates, already scanning the crowd for his family. That was the good thing about the cup happening in Ottawa this time around. T
with him.</span></p><p><span>He spotted Kiyomi on his dad's lap, jumping with the crowd like she knew exactly what was happening. She probably didn't, but if
Kiyomi was great at, it was catching a vibe. She was 21 months old and her personality had only continued to blossom along with her vocabulary. Now everyone h
about the words they used around her or else deal with the consequences.</span></p><p><span>There was a solid week where she called everything and everyone 'c
Shane say it on the phone.</span></p><p><span>He raised his stick in their direction, grinning when his parents waved back. Kiyomi started jumping more, sayin
roar of the crowd was just too loud. It didn't matter. He felt good. Really good.</span></p><p><span>The handshake line moved quickly. He shook hands with eac
Russian team and said the expected things, genuinely meaning them. They had played well. He was almost at the end of the line when he reached Rozanov.</span><
Shane said, squeezing the man's hand. He smiled. "See you in October."</span></p><p><span>Rozanov didn't verbally respond, but he did smile in return. Just ba
a ritual. </span><span>Shane refused to admit that getting that reaction out of Rozanov felt better than actually beating him.</span></p><p><span>He found his
the ice, still in full gear, and Kiyomi reached for him immediately the way she always did. Arms out, no hesitation, absolutely certain that Shane would pick
always, even with hockey tired arms. He held her firmly against his chest, sighing.</span></p><p><span>Her face dramatically scrunched up. "Stinky, dada."</sp
laughed, purposely leaned in closer and snuck a couple of fingers up her side to give her a quick tickle. She squealed and wrapped her arms around his neck, m
cared very little about how he actually smelled.</span></p><p><span>"Nana said good job!" she said after another fit of giggles. Shane smiled at his mom, alwa
Kiyomi managed to remember exactly what she was told.</span></p><p><span>Shane wasn't sure how long he stood there before he turned toward the ice and noticed
distance away, still on the ice. He looked like he was talking to a Russian team official, completely not paying anyone else any mind. And then in the next mo
trailed over to where Shane stood with his family, and Shane wished he could tell what Rozanov was thinking.</span></p><p class="font-claude-response-body bre
normal">There he was, with his gear still on, hair plastered to his forehead with sweat, a toddler nuzzling into his neck and his parents flanking him on eith
story he always told about Kiyomi (it was easy when people just assumed she was his sister), but he hadn't actually spoken to Rozanov about her. He hadn't spo
family at all, really. So he could only wonder what he was thinking. Could he tell how different his life really was off the ice? He wondered if it mattered t
<span>Their eyes met briefly, but Rozanov was the one who looked away first, his attention brought back to those around him on the ice.</span></p><p><span>"Da
asked, for once sounding like she was just about ready for a nap. Shane looked down at his daughter and tightened his grip, unconsciously nuzzling into her sw
</span></p><p><span>"Yeah, baby. We're going home now."</span></p><hr><p><em><strong>June 2010</strong></em></p><p><span>After the International Prospect Cup,
into his first professional season with the Montreal Metros. The first few months were relentless, to say the least.</span></p><p><span>The MLH schedule was b
junior leagues couldn't touch and therefore hadn't fully prepared him for. Game after game, traveling from city to city, the days stacking until they actually
each other. Shane adapted the way he always adapted, by building systems and sticking to them. He was a lot like his mother in that sense, with her intense wa
schedule.</span></p><p><span>Having a system helped him cope with the hardest part of doing this, which was being away from Kiyomi. His system was to drive ba
every home game. And for longer road trips it meant at least a phone call the moment he landed, in order to hear Kiyomi's sweet voice before she went to bed.
moments. He knew there was some kind of biological aspect to this, being away from his child, and he knew it had to be affecting her too.</span></p><p><span>T
something out for the longer stretches. She would pack up Kiyomi and meet him on the road, settling into whatever hotel the team was using for a few days at a
sustainable for every single trip, Shane knew that, but it helped ease the ache of being away. It helped more than he could even admit out loud. Thankfully hi
nothing of it. They were used to his mom, and it made sense that his little sister would tag along with her. That was normal. Nobody asked too many questions
for that.</span></p><p><span>It was still tough, though. Shane spent many nights after a rushed phone call lying in bed and wondering why he had been doing al
the point? He always came back to the same answer. This was all for her.</span></p><p><span>Kiyomi turned two in March and Shane made it his business to be ho
<p><span>She got a chocolate cake this time, at her very specific request, and she absolutely destroyed it with her signature focused energy. Shane watched he
and couldn't help but think about how much she had changed and how much she hadn't. She was physically bigger every time he saw her, and while it made his hea
probably missing those little moments, he also felt proud to know she was doing so well. That she was thriving. She was still so entirely herself, so sure, bo
that Shane had never been.</span></p><p><span>He hoped she stayed that way.</span></p><p><span>By June the season was slowly winding down and Shane had proven
prove. The Metros were pleased with his progress, which meant the media was also pleased. The narrative about the rivalry between him and Rozanov was still si
background, building and being fed by the multitudes of highlight reels and sports commentary. They were almost perfectly matched across the board.</span></p>
played against each other yet. That was coming. First, Toronto. His mom informed him he had a commercial shoot that was actually with Rozanov. At first the id
would he be promoting something with who everyone thought was his enemy? But then it was explained that people really loved this stuff.</span></p><hr><p><em><
</em></p><p><span>The CCM ad shoot was similar to ones he had done before. His mom came with him, without Kiyomi, who was back in Ottawa with his dad. He was
makeup before the gear was even put on him, which seemed kind of silly considering the helmet covered most of his face, but whatever.</span></p><p><span>Rozan
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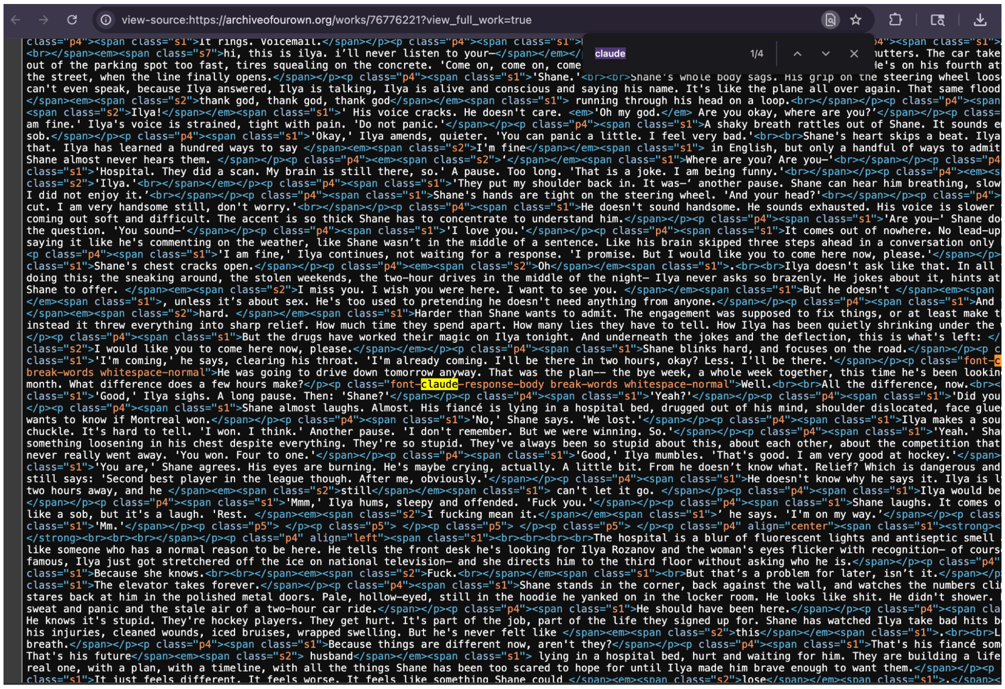
dandelionclub, “so much of living is being unknown”

5,676 kudos, 97,421 hits, 53,332 words (4 instances)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claude
1/4

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class="p4"><span class="s1">It rings. Voicemail.</span></p><p class="p4"><span class="s1">                                  4"><span class="s1">
<br></span><em><span class="s7">hi, this is ilya. i’ll never listen to your—</span></em></                                    utters. The car take
out of the parking spot too fast, tires squealing on the concrete. 'Come on, come on, come                                    e's on his fourth at
the street, when the line finally opens.</span></p><p class="p4"><span class="s1">'Shane.'<br><br>Shane's whole body sags. His grip on the steering wheel loos
can't even speak, because Ilya answered, Ilya is talking, Ilya is alive and conscious and saying his name. It's like the plane all over again. That same flood
</span><em><span class="s2">thank god, thank god, thank god</span></em><span class="s1"> running through his head on a loop.<br></span></p><p class="p4"><span
<span class="s2">Ilya!</span></em><span class="s1">' His voice cracks. He doesn't care. <em>'Oh my god.</em> Are you okay, where are you?’</span></p><p class=
am fine.' Ilya's voice is strained, tight with pain. 'Do not panic.'</span></p><p class="p4"><span class="s1">A shaky breath rattles out of Shane. It sounds e
sob.</span></p><p class="p4"><span class="s1">'Okay,' Ilya amends, quieter. 'You can panic a little. I feel very bad.'<br><br>Shane's heart skips a beat. Ilya
that. Ilya has learned a hundred ways to say </span><em><span class="s2">I'm fine</span></em><span class="s1"> in English, but only a handful of ways to admit
Shane almost never hears them. </span></p><p class="p4"><em><span class="s2">‘</span></em><span class="s1">Where are you? Are you—'<br></span></p><p class="p4
class="s1">'Hospital. They did a scan. My brain is still there, so.' A pause. Too long. 'That is a joke. I am being funny.'<br></span></p><p class="p4"><em><s
class="s2">'Ilya.'<br></span></em></p><p class="p4"><span class="s1">'They put my shoulder back in. It was—‘ another pause. Shane can hear him breathing, slow
I did not enjoy it.’<br></span></p><p class="p4"><span class="s1">Shane's hands are tight on the steering wheel. 'And your head?'<br></span></p><p class="p4">
cut. I am very handsome still, don't worry.'<br></span></p><p class="p4"><span class="s1">He doesn't sound handsome. He sounds exhausted. His voice is slower
coming out soft and difficult. The accent is so thick Shane has to concentrate to understand him.</span></p><p class="p4"><span class="s1">'Are you—' Shane do
the question. 'You sound—‘</span></p><p class="p4"><span class="s1">'I love you.'</span></p><p class="p4"><span class="s1">It comes out of nowhere. No lead-up
saying it like he's commenting on the weather, like Shane wasn’t in the middle of a sentence. Like his brain skipped three steps ahead in a conversation only
<p class="p4"><span class="s1">'I am fine,' Ilya continues, not waiting for a response. 'I promise. But I would like you to come here now, please.'</span></p>
class="s1">Shane's chest cracks open.</span></p><p class="p4"><em><span class="s2">Oh</span></em><span class="s1">.<br><br>Ilya doesn't ask like that. In all
doing this; the sneaking around, the stolen weekends, the two-hour drives in the middle of the night— Ilya never asks so brazenly. He jokes about it, hints at
Shane to offer. </span><em><span class="s2">I miss you. I wish you were here. I want to see you. </span></em><span class="s1">But he doesn't </span><em><span
</em><span class="s1">, unless it’s about sex. He's too used to pretending he doesn't need anything from anyone.</span></p><p class="p4"><span class="s1">And
</span><em><span class="s2">hard. </span></em><span class="s1">Harder than Shane wants to admit. The engagement was supposed to fix things, or at least make t
instead it threw everything into sharp relief. How much time they spend apart. How many lies they have to tell. How Ilya has been quietly shrinking under the
</p><p class="p4"><span class="s1">But the drugs have worked their magic on Ilya tonight. And underneath the jokes and the deflection, this is what's left: </
class="s2">I would like you to come here now, please.</span></em></p><p class="p4"><span class="s1">Shane blinks hard, and focuses on the road.</span></p><p c
class="s1">'I'm coming,' he says, clearing his throat. 'I'm already coming. I'll be there in two hours, okay? Less. I'll be there.'</span></p><p class="font-c
break-words whitespace-normal">He was going to drive down tomorrow anyway. That was the plan-- the bye week, a whole week together, this time he's been lookin
month. What difference does a few hours make?</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Well.<br><br>All the difference, now.<br><
class="s1">'Good,' Ilya sighs. A long pause. Then: 'Shane?'</span></p><p class="p4"><span class="s1">'Yeah?'</span></p><p class="p4"><span class="s1">'Did you
</p><p class="p4"><span class="s1">Shane almost laughs. Almost. His fiancé is lying in a hospital bed, drugged out of his mind, shoulder dislocated, face glue
wants to know if Montreal won.</span></p><p class="p4"><span class="s1">'No,' Shane says. 'We lost.'</span></p><p class="p4"><span class="s1">Ilya makes a sou
chuckle. It's hard to tell. 'I won. I think.' Another pause. 'I don't remember. But we were winning. So.'</span></p><p class="p4"><span class="s1">'Yeah.' Sha
something loosening in his chest despite everything. They're so stupid. They've always been so stupid about this, about each other, about the competition that
never really went away. 'You won. Four to one.'</span></p><p class="p4"><span class="s1">'Good,' Ilya mumbles. 'That's good. I am very good at hockey.'</span>
class="s1">'You are,' Shane agrees. His eyes are burning. He's maybe crying, actually. A little bit. From he doesn’t know what. Relief? Which is dangerous and
still says: 'Second best player in the league though. After me, obviously.'</span></p><p class="p4"><span class="s1">He doesn't know why he says it. Ilya is l
two hours away, and he </span><em><span class="s2">still</span></em><span class="s1"> can't let it go. </span></p><p class="p4"><span class="s1">Ilya would be
</span></p><p class="p4"><span class="s1">'Mmm,' Ilya hums, sleepy and offended. 'Fuck you.'</span></p><p class="p4"><span class="s1">Shane laughs. It comes o
like a sob, but it's a laugh. 'Rest. </span><em><span class="s2">I fucking mean it.</span></em><span class="s1">’ he says. 'I'm on my way.’</span></p><p class
class="s1">'Mm.'</span></p><p class="p5"> </p><p class="p5"> </p><p class="p5"> </p><p class="p5"> </p><p class="p4" align="center"><span class="s1"><strong><
</strong><br><br><br></span></p><p class="p4" align="left"><span class="s1"><br><br><br><br>The hospital is a blur of fluorescent lights and antiseptic smell
like someone who has a normal reason to be here. He tells the front desk he's looking for Ilya Rozanov and the woman's eyes flicker with recognition— of cours
famous, Ilya just got stretchered off the ice on national television— and she directs him to the third floor without asking who he is.</span></p><p class="p4"
class="s1">Because she knows.<br><br></span><em><span class="s2">Fuck.<br></span></em><span class="s1"><br>But that’s a problem for later, isn’t it.</span></p
class="s1">The elevator takes forever.</span></p><p class="p4"><span class="s1">Shane stands in the corner, back against the wall, and watches the numbers cli
stares back at him in the polished metal doors. Pale, hollow-eyed, still in the hoodie he yanked on in the locker room. He looks like shit. He didn't shower.
sweat and panic and the stale air of a two-hour car ride.</span></p><p class="p4"><span class="s1">He should have been here.</span></p><p class="p4"><span cla
He knows it's stupid. They're hockey players. They get hurt. It's part of the job, part of the life they signed up for. Shane has watched Ilya take bad hits b
his injuries, cleaned wounds, iced bruises, wrapped swelling. But he's never felt like </span><em><span class="s2">this</span></em><span class="s1">.<br><br>L
breath.</span></p><p class="p4"><span class="s1">Because things are different now, aren't they?</span></p><p class="p4"><span class="s1">That's his fiancé som
That's his future</span><em><span class="s2"> husband</span></em><span class="s1"> lying in a hospital bed, hurt and waiting for him. They are building a life
real one, with a plan, with a timeline, with all the things Shane has been too scared to hope for until Ilya made him brave enough to want them.</span></p><p
class="s1">It just feels different. It feels worse. It feels like something Shane could </span><em><span class="s2">lose</span></em><span class="s1">.</span><
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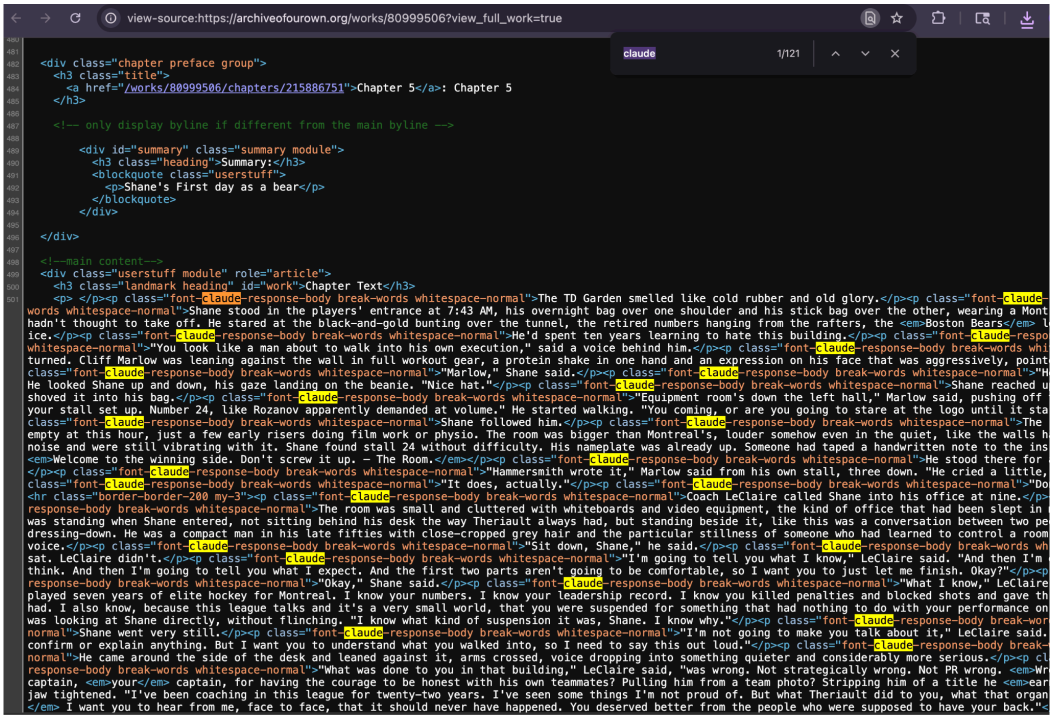
DropTheLaur, “The weight we carry”

1,061 kudos, 17,179 hits, 12,939 words (121 instances)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1/121

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    <!-- only display byline if different from the main byline -->

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            <p>Shane's First day as a bear</p>
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  <!--main content-->
  <div class="userstuff module" role="article">
    <h3 class="landmark heading" id="work">Chapter Text</h3>
    <p> </p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">The TD Garden smelled like cold rubber and old glory.</p><p class="font-claude-
words whitespace-normal">Shane stood in the players' entrance at 7:43 AM, his overnight bag over one shoulder and his stick bag over the other, wearing a Mont
hadn't thought to take off. He stared at the black-and-gold bunting over the tunnel, the retired numbers hanging from the rafters, the <em>Boston Bears</em> l
ice.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">He'd spent ten years learning to hate this building.</p><p class="font-claude-respo
whitespace-normal">"You look like a man about to walk into his own execution," said a voice behind him.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whi
turned. Cliff Marlow was leaning against the wall in full workout gear, a protein shake in one hand and an expression on his face that was aggressively, point
class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Marlow," Shane said.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"H
He looked Shane up and down, his gaze landing on the beanie. "Nice hat."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane reached u
shoved it into his bag.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Equipment room's down the left hall," Marlow said, pushing off
your stall set up. Number 24, like Rozanov apparently demanded at volume." He started walking. "You coming, or are you going to stare at the logo until it sta
class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane followed him.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">The
empty at this hour, just a few early risers doing film work or physio. The room was bigger than Montreal's, louder somehow even in the quiet, like the walls h
noise and were still vibrating with it. Shane found stall 24 without difficulty. His nameplate was already up. Someone had taped a handwritten note to the ins
<em>Welcome to the winning side. Don't screw it up. — The Room.</em></p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">He stood there for
</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Hammersmith wrote it," Marlow said from his own stall, three down. "He cried a little,
class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"It does, actually."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Do
<hr class="border-border-200 my-3"><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Coach LeClaire called Shane into his office at nine.</p>
response-body break-words whitespace-normal">The room was small and cluttered with whiteboards and video equipment, the kind of office that had been slept in
was standing when Shane entered, not sitting behind his desk the way Theriault always had, but standing beside it, like this was a conversation between two pe
dressing-down. He was a compact man in his late fifties with close-cropped grey hair and the particular stillness of someone who had learned to control a room
voice.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Sit down, Shane," he said.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words wh
sat. LeClaire didn't.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"I'm going to tell you what I know," LeClaire said. "And then I'm
think. And then I'm going to tell you what I expect. And the first two parts aren't going to be comfortable, so I want you to just let me finish. Okay?"</p><p
response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Okay," Shane said.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"What I know," LeClaire
played seven years of elite hockey for Montreal. I know your numbers. I know your leadership record. I know you killed penalties and blocked shots and gave th
had. I also know, because this league talks and it's a very small world, that you were suspended for something that had nothing to do with your performance on
was looking at Shane directly, without flinching. "I know what kind of suspension it was, Shane. I know why."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-wor
normal">Shane went very still.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"I'm not going to make you talk about it," LeClaire said.
confirm or explain anything. But I want you to understand what you walked into, so I need to say this out loud."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-
normal">He came around the side of the desk and leaned against it, arms crossed, voice dropping into something quieter and considerably more serious.</p><p cl
response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"What was done to you in that building," LeClaire said, "was wrong. Not strategically wrong. Not PR wrong. <em>Wr
captain, <em>your</em> captain, for having the courage to be honest with his own teammates? Pulling him from a team photo? Stripping him of a title he <em>ear
jaw tightened. "I've been coaching in this league for twenty-two years. I've seen some things I'm not proud of. But what Theriault did to you, what that organ
</em> I want you to hear from me, face to face, that it should never have happened. You deserved better from the people who were supposed to have your back."<
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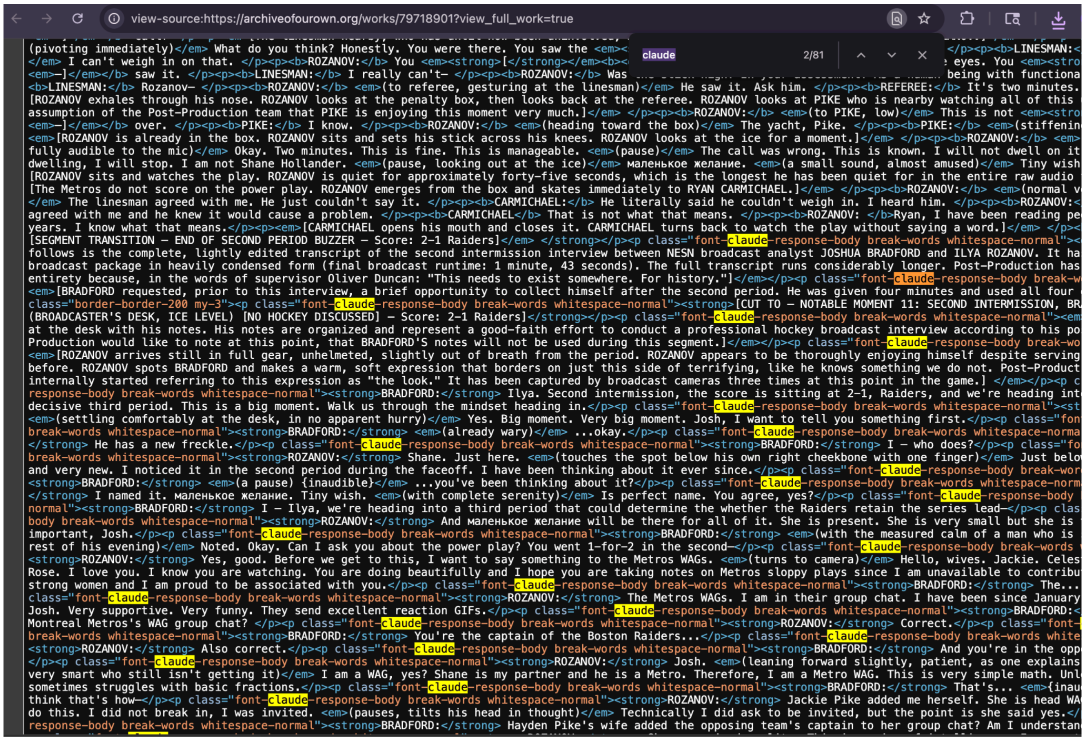
flashytonystark, “boston lily & associates”

7,517 kudos, 249,979 hits, 93,504 words (81 instances)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claude
2/81

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(pivoting immediately)</em> What do you think? Honestly. You were there. You saw the <em><      </p><p><b>LINESMAN:<
</em> I can't weigh in on that. </p><p><b>ROZANOV:</b> You <em><strong>[</strong></em><b><      e eyes. You <em><stro
<em>—]</em></b> saw it. </p><p><b>LINESMAN:</b> I really can't— </p><p><b>ROZANOV:</b> Was      being with functiona
<b>LINESMAN:</b> Rozanov— </p><p><b>ROZANOV:</b> <em>(to referee, gesturing at the linesman)</em> He saw it. Ask him. </p><p><b>REFEREE:</b> It's two minutes.
[ROZANOV exhales through his nose. ROZANOV looks at the penalty box, then looks back at the referee. ROZANOV looks at PIKE who is nearby watching all of this
assumption of the Post-Production team that PIKE is enjoying this moment very much.]</em> </p><p><b>ROZANOV:</b> <em>(to PIKE, low)</em> This is not <em><stro
<em>—]</em></b> over. </p><p><b>PIKE:</b> I know. </p><p><b>ROZANOV:</b> <em>(heading toward the box)</em> The yacht, Pike. </p><p><b>PIKE:</b> <em>(stiffenin
<em>[ROZANOV is already in the box. ROZANOV sits and sets his stick across his knees. ROZANOV looks at the ice for a moment.]</em> </p><p><b>ROZANOV:</b> <em>
fully audible to the mic)</em> Okay. Two minutes. This is fine. This is manageable. <em>(pause)</em> The call was wrong. This is known. I will not dwell on it
dwelling, I will stop. I am not Shane Hollander. <em>(pause, looking out at the ice)</em> маленькое желание. <em>(a small sound, almost amused)</em> Tiny wish
[ROZANOV sits and watches the play. ROZANOV is quiet for approximately forty-five seconds, which is the longest he has been quiet for in the entire raw audio
[The Metros do not score on the power play. ROZANOV emerges from the box and skates immediately to RYAN CARMICHAEL.]</em> </p><p><b>ROZANOV:</b> <em>(normal v
</em> The linesman agreed with me. He just couldn't say it. </p><p><b>CARMICHAEL:</b> He literally said he couldn't weigh in. I heard him. </p><p><b>ROZANOV:<
agreed with me and he knew it would cause a problem. </p><p><b>CARMICHAEL</b> That is not what that means. </p><p><b>ROZANOV: </b>Ryan, I have been reading pe
years. I know what that means.</p><p><em>[CARMICHAEL opens his mouth and closes it. CARMICHAEL turns back to watch the play without saying a word.]</em> </p><
[SEGMENT TRANSITION — END OF SECOND PERIOD BUZZER — Score: 2-1 Raiders]</em> </strong></p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal"><
follows is the complete, lightly edited transcript of the second intermission interview between NESN broadcast analyst JOSHUA BRADFORD and ILYA ROZANOV. It ha
broadcast package in heavily condensed form (final broadcast runtime: 1 minute, 43 seconds). The full transcript runs considerably longer. Post-Production has
entirety because, in the words of supervisor Oliver Duncan: "This needs to exist somewhere. For history."]</em></p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-w
<em>[BRADFORD requested, prior to this interview, a brief opportunity to collect himself after the second period. He was given four minutes and used all four
class="border-border-200 my-3"><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal"><strong>[CUT TO — NOTABLE MOMENT 11: SECOND INTERMISSION, BR
(BROADCASTER'S DESK, ICE LEVEL) [NO HOCKEY DISCUSSED] — Score: 2-1 Raiders]</strong></p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal"><em
at the desk with his notes. His notes are organized and represent a good-faith effort to conduct a professional hockey broadcast interview according to his po
Production would like to note at this point, that BRADFORD'S notes will not be used during this segment.]</em></p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-wo
<em>[ROZANOV arrives still in full gear, unhelmeted, slightly out of breath from the period. ROZANOV appears to be thoroughly enjoying himself despite serving
before. ROZANOV spots BRADFORD and makes a warm, soft expression that borders on just this side of terrifying, like he knows something we do not. Post-Product
internally started referring to this expression as "the look." It has been captured by broadcast cameras three times at this point in the game.] </em></p><p c
response-body break-words whitespace-normal"><strong>BRADFORD:</strong> Ilya. Second intermission, the score is sitting at 2-1, Raiders, and we're heading int
decisive third period. This is a big moment. Walk us through the mindset heading in.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal"><st
<em>(settling comfortably at the desk, in no apparent hurry)</em> Yes. Big moment. Very big moment. Josh, I want to tell you something first.</p><p class="fon
break-words whitespace-normal"><strong>BRADFORD:</strong> <em>(already wary)</em> ...okay.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-norma
</strong> He has a new freckle.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal"><strong>BRADFORD:</strong> I — who does?</p><p class="fo
break-words whitespace-normal"><strong>ROZANOV:</strong> Shane. Just here. <em>(touches the spot below his own right cheekbone with one finger)</em> Just belo
and very new. I noticed it in the second period during the faceoff. I have been thinking about it ever since.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-wor
<strong>BRADFORD:</strong> <em>(a pause) {inaudible}</em> ...you've been thinking about it?</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-norm
</strong> I named it. маленькое желание. Tiny wish. <em>(with complete serenity)</em> Is perfect name. You agree, yes?</p><p class="font-claude-response-body
normal"><strong>BRADFORD:</strong> I — Ilya, we're heading into a third period that could determine the whether the Raiders retain the series lead—</p><p clas
body break-words whitespace-normal"><strong>ROZANOV:</strong> And маленькое желание will be there for all of it. She is present. She is very small but she is
important, Josh.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal"><strong>BRADFORD:</strong> <em>(with the measured calm of a man who is
rest of his evening)</em> Noted. Okay. Can I ask you about the power play? You went 1-for-2 in the second—</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words
<strong>ROZANOV:</strong> Yes, good. Before we get to this, I want to say something to the Metros WAGs. <em>(turns to camera)</em> Hello, wives. Jackie. Celes
Rose. I love you. I know you are watching. You are doing beautifully and I hope you are taking notes on Metros sloppy plays since I am unavailable to contribu
strong women and I am proud to be associated with you.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal"><strong>BRADFORD:</strong> The...
class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal"><strong>ROZANOV:</strong> The Metros WAGs. I am in their group chat. I have been since January
Josh. Very supportive. Very funny. They send excellent reaction GIFs.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal"><strong>BRADFORD:<
Montreal Metros's WAG group chat? </p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal"><strong>ROZANOV:</strong> Correct.</p><p class="font-
break-words whitespace-normal"><strong>BRADFORD:</strong> You're the captain of the Boston Raiders...</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words white
<strong>ROZANOV:</strong> Also correct.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal"><strong>BRADFORD:</strong> And you're in the opp
</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal"><strong>ROZANOV:</strong> Josh. <em>(leaning forward slightly, patient, as one explains
very smart who still isn't getting it)</em> I am a WAG, yes? Shane is my partner and he is a Metro. Therefore, I am a Metro WAG. This is very simple math. Unl
sometimes struggles with basic fractions.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal"><strong>BRADFORD:</strong> That's... <em>{inau
think that's how—</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal"><strong>ROZANOV:</strong> Jackie Pike added me herself. She is head WA
do this. I did not break in, I was invited. <em>(pauses, tilts his head in thought)</em> Technically I did ask to be invited, but the point is she said yes.</
response-body break-words whitespace-normal"><strong>BRADFORD:</strong> Hayden Pike's wife added the opposing team's captain to her group chat? Am I understan
```
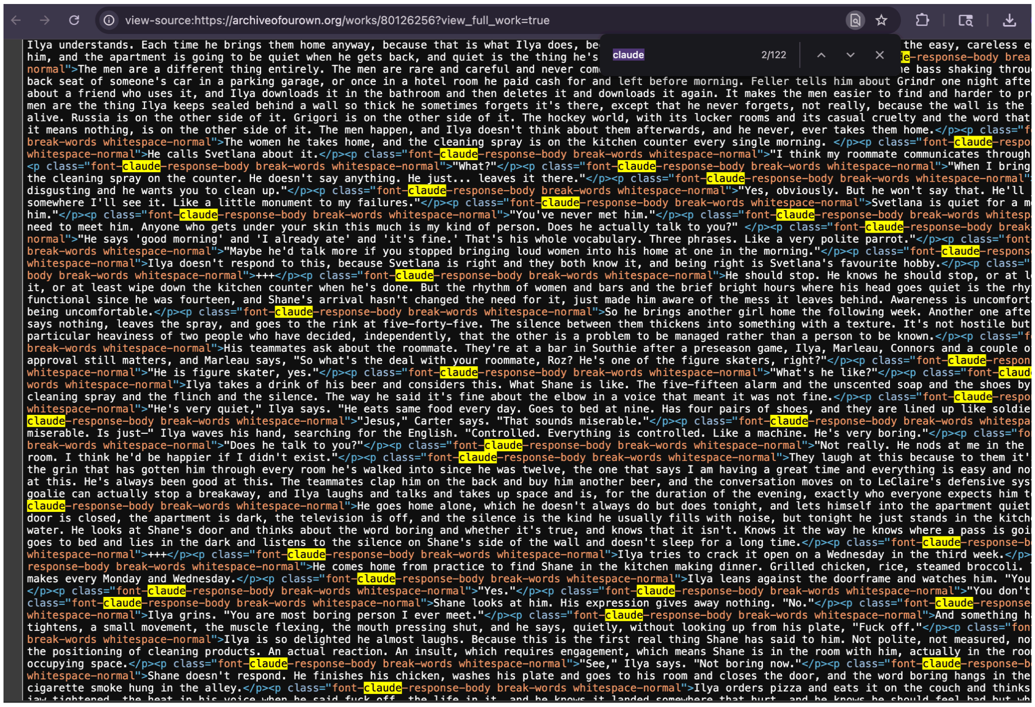

frozenmorningdew, “hanging by a moment”

10,284 kudos, 467,825 hits, 187,083 words (122 instances)


view-source:https://archiveofourown.org/works/80126256?view_full_work=true
claude
2/122

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Ilya understands. Each time he brings them home anyway, because that is what Ilya does, be      the easy, careless e
him, and the apartment is going to be quiet when he gets back, and quiet is the thing he's      e-response-body brea
normal">The men are a different thing entirely. The men are rare and careful and never com      e bass shaking throu
back seat of someone's car in a parking garage, or once in a hotel room he paid cash for and left before morning. Feller tells him about Grindr one night afte
about a friend who uses it, and Ilya downloads it in the bathroom and then deletes it and downloads it again. It makes the men easier to find and harder to pr
men are the thing Ilya keeps sealed behind a wall so thick he sometimes forgets it's there, except that he never forgets, not really, because the wall is the
alive. Russia is on the other side of it. Grigori is on the other side of it. The hockey world, with its locker rooms and its casual cruelty and the word that
it means nothing, is on the other side of it. The men happen, and Ilya doesn't think about them afterwards, and he never, ever takes them home.</p><p class="f
break-words whitespace-normal">The women he takes home, and the cleaning spray is on the kitchen counter every single morning. </p><p class="font-claude-respo
whitespace-normal">He calls Svetlana about it.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"I think my roommate communicates through
<p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"What?"</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"When I bring
the cleaning spray on the counter. He doesn't say anything. He just... leaves it there."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal"
disgusting and he wants you to clean up."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Yes, obviously. But he won't say that. He'll
somewhere I'll see it. Like a little monument to my failures."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Svetlana is quiet for a m
him."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"You've never met him."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitesp
need to meet him. Anyone who gets under your skin this much is my kind of person. Does he actually talk to you?" </p><p class="font-claude-response-body break
normal">"He says 'good morning' and 'I already ate' and 'it's fine.' That's his whole vocabulary. Three phrases. Like a very polite parrot."</p><p class="font
break-words whitespace-normal">"Maybe he'd talk more if you stopped bringing loud women into his home at one in the morning."</p><p class="font-claude-respons
whitespace-normal">Ilya doesn't respond to this, because Svetlana is right and they both know it, and being right is Svetlana's favourite hobby.</p><p class="
body break-words whitespace-normal">+++</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">He should stop. He knows he should stop, or at l
it, or at least wipe down the kitchen counter when he's done. But the rhythm of women and bars and the brief bright hours where his head goes quiet is the rhy
functional since he was fourteen, and Shane's arrival hasn't changed the need for it, just made him aware of the mess it leaves behind. Awareness is uncomfort
being uncomfortable.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">So he brings another girl home the following week. Another one afte
says nothing, leaves the spray, and goes to the rink at five-forty-five. The silence between them thickens into something with a texture. It's not hostile but
particular heaviness of two people who have decided, independently, that the other is a problem to be managed rather than a person to be known.</p><p class="f
break-words whitespace-normal">His teammates ask about the roommate. They're at a bar in Southie after a preseason game, Ilya, Marleau, Connors and a couple o
approval still matters, and Marleau says, "So what's the deal with your roommate, Roz? He's one of the figure skaters, right?"</p><p class="font-claude-respon
whitespace-normal">"He is figure skater, yes."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"What's he like?"</p><p class="font-claud
words whitespace-normal">Ilya takes a drink of his beer and considers this. What Shane is like. The five-fifteen alarm and the unscented soap and the shoes by
cleaning spray and the flinch and the silence. The way he said it's fine about the elbow in a voice that meant it was not fine.</p><p class="font-claude-respo
whitespace-normal">"He's very quiet," Ilya says. "He eats same food every day. Goes to bed at nine. Has four pairs of shoes, and they are lined up like soldie
claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Jesus," Carter says. "That sounds miserable."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespa
miserable. Is just—" Ilya waves his hand, searching for the English. "Controlled. Everything is controlled. Like a machine. He's very boring."</p><p class="fo
break-words whitespace-normal">"Does he talk to you?"</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Not really. He nods at me in the
room. I think he'd be happier if I didn't exist."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">They laugh at this because to them it'
the grin that has gotten him through every room he's walked into since he was twelve, the one that says I am having a great time and everything is easy and no
at this. He's always been good at this. The teammates clap him on the back and buy him another beer, and the conversation moves on to LeClaire's defensive sys
goalie can actually stop a breakaway, and Ilya laughs and talks and takes up space and is, for the duration of the evening, exactly who everyone expects him t
claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">He goes home alone, which he doesn't always do but does tonight, and lets himself into the apartment quiet
door is closed, the apartment is dark, the television is off, and the silence is the kind he usually fills with noise, but tonight he just stands in the kitche
water. He looks at Shane's door and thinks about the word boring and whether it's true, and knows that it isn't. Knows it the way he knows where a pass is goi
goes to bed and lies in the dark and listens to the silence on Shane's side of the wall and doesn't sleep for a long time.</p><p class="font-claude-response-b
whitespace-normal">+++</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Ilya tries to crack it open on a Wednesday in the third week.</p>
response-body break-words whitespace-normal">He comes home from practice to find Shane in the kitchen making dinner. Grilled chicken, rice, steamed broccoli.
makes every Monday and Wednesday.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Ilya leans against the doorframe and watches him. "You
</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Yes."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"You don't
class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane looks at him. His expression gives away nothing. "No."</p><p class="font-claude-response
whitespace-normal">Ilya grins. "You are most boring person I ever meet."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">And something ha
tightens, a small movement, the muscle flexing, the mouth pressing shut, and he says, quietly, without looking up from his plate, "Fuck off."</p><p class="fon
break-words whitespace-normal">Ilya is so delighted he almost laughs. Because this is the first real thing Shane has said to him. Not polite, not measured, no
the positioning of cleaning products. An actual reaction. An insult, which requires engagement, which means Shane is in the room with him, actually in the roo
occupying space.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"See," Ilya says. "Not boring now."</p><p class="font-claude-response-b
whitespace-normal">Shane doesn't respond. He finishes his chicken, washes his plate and goes to his room and closes the door, and the word boring hangs in the
cigarette smoke hung in the alley.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Ilya orders pizza and eats it on the couch and thinks
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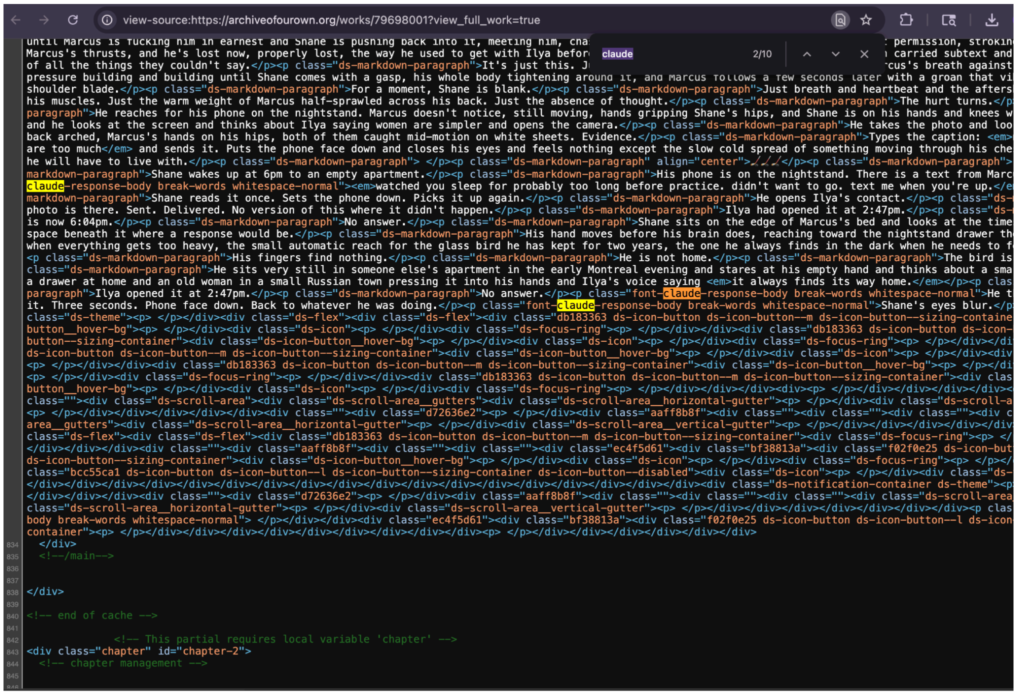
honeythief_bug, "Cross Check"

3,675 kudos, 159,823 hits, 76,479 words (10 instances)


view-source:https://archiveofourown.org/works/79698001?view_full_work=true
claude
2/10

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until Marcus is fucking him in earnest and Shane is pushing back into it, meeting him, cha  permission, strokin
Marcus's thrusts, and he's lost now, properly lost, the way he used to get with Ilya befor  carried subtext and
of all the things they couldn't say.</p><p class="ds-markdown-paragraph">It's just this. J  cus's breath against
pressure building and building until Shane comes with a gasp, his whole body tightening around it, and Marcus follows a few seconds later with a groan that vi
shoulder blade.</p><p class="ds-markdown-paragraph">For a moment, Shane is blank.</p><p class="ds-markdown-paragraph">Just breath and heartbeat and the afters
his muscles. Just the warm weight of Marcus half-sprawled across his back. Just the absence of thought.</p><p class="ds-markdown-paragraph">The hurt turns.</p
paragraph">He reaches for his phone on the nightstand. Marcus doesn't notice, still moving, hands gripping Shane's hips, and Shane is on his hands and knees w
and he looks at the screen and thinks about Ilya saying women are simpler and opens the camera.</p><p class="ds-markdown-paragraph">He takes the photo and loo
back arched, Marcus's hands on his hips, both of them caught mid-motion on white sheets. Evidence.</p><p class="ds-markdown-paragraph">Types the caption: <em>
are too much</em> and sends it. Puts the phone face down and closes his eyes and feels nothing except the slow cold spread of something moving through his che
he will have to live with.</p><p class="ds-markdown-paragraph"> </p><p class="ds-markdown-paragraph" align="center">🏒🏒🏒</p><p class="ds-markdown-paragraph">
markdown-paragraph">Shane wakes up at 6pm to an empty apartment.</p><p class="ds-markdown-paragraph">His phone is on the nightstand. There is a text from Marc
claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal"><em>watched you sleep for probably too long before practice. didn't want to go. text me when you're up.</e
markdown-paragraph">Shane reads it once. Sets the phone down. Picks it up again.</p><p class="ds-markdown-paragraph">He opens Ilya's contact.</p><p class="ds-
photo is there. Sent. Delivered. No version of this where it didn't happen.</p><p class="ds-markdown-paragraph">Ilya had opened it at 2:47pm.</p><p class="ds-
is now 6:04pm.</p><p class="ds-markdown-paragraph">No answer.</p><p class="ds-markdown-paragraph">Shane sits on the edge of Marcus's bed and looks at the time
space beneath it where a response would be.</p><p class="ds-markdown-paragraph">His hand moves before his brain does, reaching toward the nightstand drawer th
when everything gets too heavy, the small automatic reach for the glass bird he has kept for two years, the one he always finds in the dark when he needs to f
<p class="ds-markdown-paragraph">His fingers find nothing.</p><p class="ds-markdown-paragraph">He is not home.</p><p class="ds-markdown-paragraph">The bird is
class="ds-markdown-paragraph">He sits very still in someone else's apartment in the early Montreal evening and stares at his empty hand and thinks about a sma
a drawer at home and an old woman in a small Russian town pressing it into his hands and Ilya's voice saying <em>it always finds its way home.</em></p><p clas
paragraph">Ilya opened it at 2:47pm.</p><p class="ds-markdown-paragraph">No answer.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">He t
it. Three seconds. Phone face down. Back to whatever he was doing.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane's eyes blur.</p
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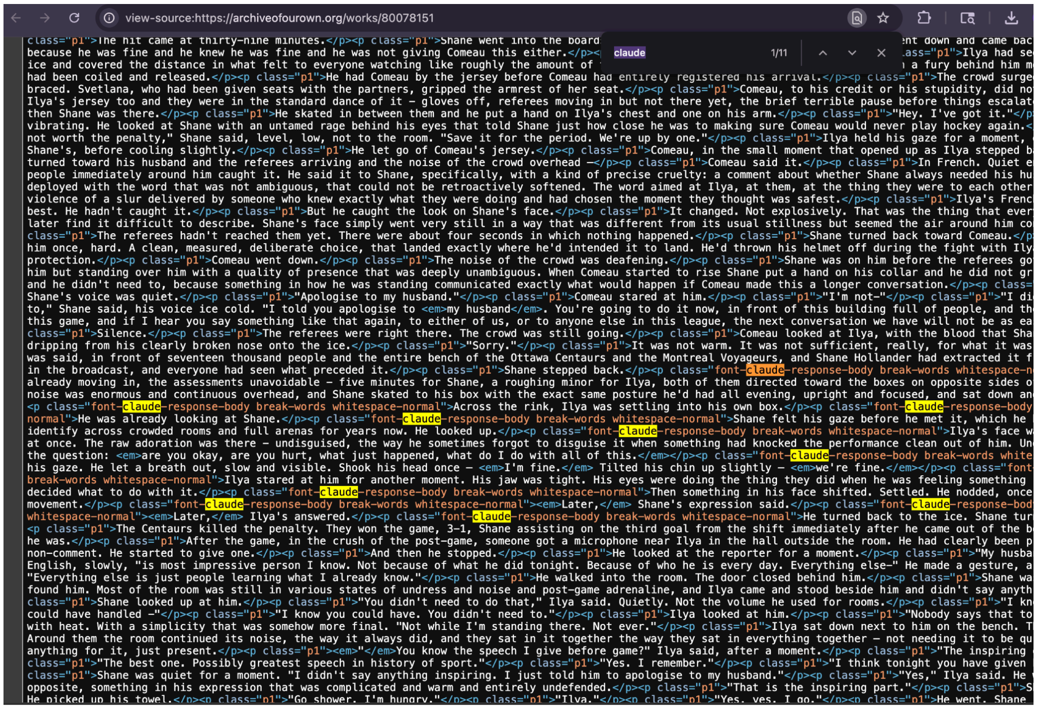
just_chemicals, "Three Things I Don't Play About"

6,056 kudos, 40,743 hits, 11,303 words (11 instances)



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class="p1">The hit came at thirty-nine minutes.</p><p class="p1">Shane went into the board  ent down and came bac
because he was fine and he knew he was fine and he was not giving Comeau this either.</p><  ass="p1">Ilya had se
ice and covered the distance in what felt to everyone watching like roughly the amount of   a fury behind him m
had been coiled and released.</p><p class="p1">He had Comeau by the jersey before Comeau had entirely registered his arrival.</p><p class="p1">The crowd surge
braced. Svetlana, who had been given seats with the partners, gripped the armrest of her seat.</p><p class="p1">Comeau, to his credit or his stupidity, did no
Ilya's jersey too and they were in the standard dance of it – gloves off, referees moving in but not there yet, the brief terrible pause before things escalat
then Shane was there.</p><p class="p1">He skated in between them and he put a hand on Ilya's chest and one on his arm.</p><p class="p1">"Hey. I've got it."</p
vibrating. He looked at Shane with an untamed rage behind his eyes that told Shane just how close he was to making sure Comeau would never play hockey again.<
not worth the penalty," Shane said, level, low, not to the room. "Save it for the period. We're up by one."</p><p class="p1">Ilya held his gaze for a moment,
Shane's, before cooling slightly.</p><p class="p1">He let go of Comeau's jersey.</p><p class="p1">Comeau, in the small moment that opened up as Ilya stepped b
turned toward his husband and the referees arriving and the noise of the crowd overhead –</p><p class="p1">Comeau said it.</p><p class="p1">In French. Quiet e
people immediately around him caught it. He said it to Shane, specifically, with a kind of precise cruelty: a comment about whether Shane always needed his hu
deployed with the word that was not ambiguous, that could not be retroactively softened. The word aimed at Ilya, at them, at the thing they were to each other
violence of a slur delivered by someone who knew exactly what they were doing and had chosen the moment they thought was safest.</p><p class="p1">Ilya's Frenc
best. He hadn't caught it.</p><p class="p1">But he caught the look on Shane's face.</p><p class="p1">It changed. Not explosively. That was the thing that ever
later find it difficult to describe. Shane's face simply went very still in a way that was different from its usual stillness but seemed the air around him co
class="p1">The referees hadn't reached them yet. There were about four seconds in which nothing happened.</p><p class="p1">Shane turned back toward Comeau.</p
him once, hard. A clean, measured, deliberate choice, that landed exactly where he'd intended it to land. He'd thrown his helmet off during the fight with Ily
protection.</p><p class="p1">Comeau went down.</p><p class="p1">The noise of the crowd was deafening.</p><p class="p1">Shane was on him before the referees go
him but standing over him with a quality of presence that was deeply unambiguous. When Comeau started to rise Shane put a hand on his collar and he did not gr
and he didn't need to, because something in how he was standing communicated exactly what would happen if Comeau made this a longer conversation.</p><p class=
Shane's voice was quiet.</p><p class="p1">"Apologise to my husband."</p><p class="p1">Comeau stared at him.</p><p class="p1">"I'm not–"</p><p class="p1">"I di
to," Shane said, his voice ice cold. "I told you apologise to <em>my husband</em>. You're going to do it now, in front of this building full of people, and th
this game, and if I hear you say something like that again, to either of us, or to anyone else in this league, the next conversation we have will not be as ea
class="p1">Silence.</p><p class="p1">The referees were right there. The crowd was still going.</p><p class="p1">Comeau looked at Ilya, with the blood that Sha
dripping from his clearly broken nose onto the ice.</p><p class="p1">"Sorry."</p><p class="p1">It was not warm. It was not sufficient, really, for what it was
was said, in front of seventeen thousand people and the entire bench of the Ottawa Centaurs and the Montreal Voyageurs, and Shane Hollander had extracted it f
in the broadcast, and everyone had seen what preceded it.</p><p class="p1">Shane stepped back.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-n
already moving in, the assessments unavoidable – five minutes for Shane, a roughing minor for Ilya, both of them directed toward the boxes on opposite sides o
noise was enormous and continuous overhead, and Shane skated to his box with the exact same posture he'd had all evening, upright and focused, and sat down an
<p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Across the rink, Ilya was settling into his own box.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body
normal">He was already looking at Shane.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane felt his gaze before he met it, which he
identify across crowded rooms and full arenas for years now. He looked up.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Ilya's face w
at once. The raw adoration was there – undisguised, the way he sometimes forgot to disguise it when something had knocked the performance clean out of him. Un
the question: <em>are you okay, are you hurt, what just happened, what do I do with all of this.</em></p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words white
his gaze. He let a breath out, slow and visible. Shook his head once – <em>I'm fine.</em> Tilted his chin up slightly – <em>we're fine.</em></p><p class="font
break-words whitespace-normal">Ilya stared at him for another moment. His jaw was tight. His eyes were doing the thing they did when he was feeling something
decided what to do with it.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Then something in his face shifted. Settled. He nodded, once
movement.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal"><em>Later,</em> Shane's expression said.</p><p class="font-claude-response-bod
whitespace-normal"><em>Later,</em> Ilya's answered.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">He turned back to the ice. Shane tur
<p class="p1">The Centaurs killed the penalty. They won the game, 3-1, Shane assisting on the third goal from the shift immediately after he came out of the b
he was.</p><p class="p1">After the game, in the crush of the post-game, someone got a microphone near Ilya in the hall outside the room. He had clearly been p
non-comment. He started to give one.</p><p class="p1">And then he stopped.</p><p class="p1">He looked at the reporter for a moment.</p><p class="p1">"My husba
English, slowly, "is most impressive person I know. Not because of what he did tonight. Because of who he is every day. Everything else–" He made a gesture, a
"Everything else is just people learning what I already know."</p><p class="p1">He walked into the room. The door closed behind him.</p><p class="p1">Shane wa
found him. Most of the room was still in various states of undress and noise and post-game adrenaline, and Ilya came and stood beside him and didn't say anyth
class="p1">Shane looked up at him.</p><p class="p1">"You didn't need to do that," Ilya said. Quietly. Not the volume he used for rooms.</p><p class="p1">"I kn
could have handled –"</p><p class="p1">"I know you could have. You didn't need to."</p><p class="p1">Ilya looked at him.</p><p class="p1">"Nobody says that to
with heat. With a simplicity that was somehow more final. "Not while I'm standing there. Not ever."</p><p class="p1">Ilya sat down next to him on the bench. T
Around them the room continued its noise, the way it always did, and they sat in it together the way they sat in everything together – not needing it to be qu
anything for it, just present.</p><p class="p1"><em>"</em>You know the speech I give before game?" Ilya said, after a moment.</p><p class="p1">"The inspiring
class="p1">"The best one. Possibly greatest speech in history of sport."</p><p class="p1">"Yes. I remember."</p><p class="p1">"I think tonight you have given
class="p1">Shane was quiet for a moment. "I didn't say anything inspiring. I just told him to apologise to my husband."</p><p class="p1">"Yes," Ilya said. He
opposite, something in his expression that was complicated and warm and entirely undefended.</p><p class="p1">"That is the inspiring part."</p><p class="p1">S
He picked up his towel.</p><p class="p1">"Go shower. I'm hungry."</p><p class="p1">"Ilya."</p><p class="p1">"Yes, yes, I go."</p><p class="p1">He went. Shane
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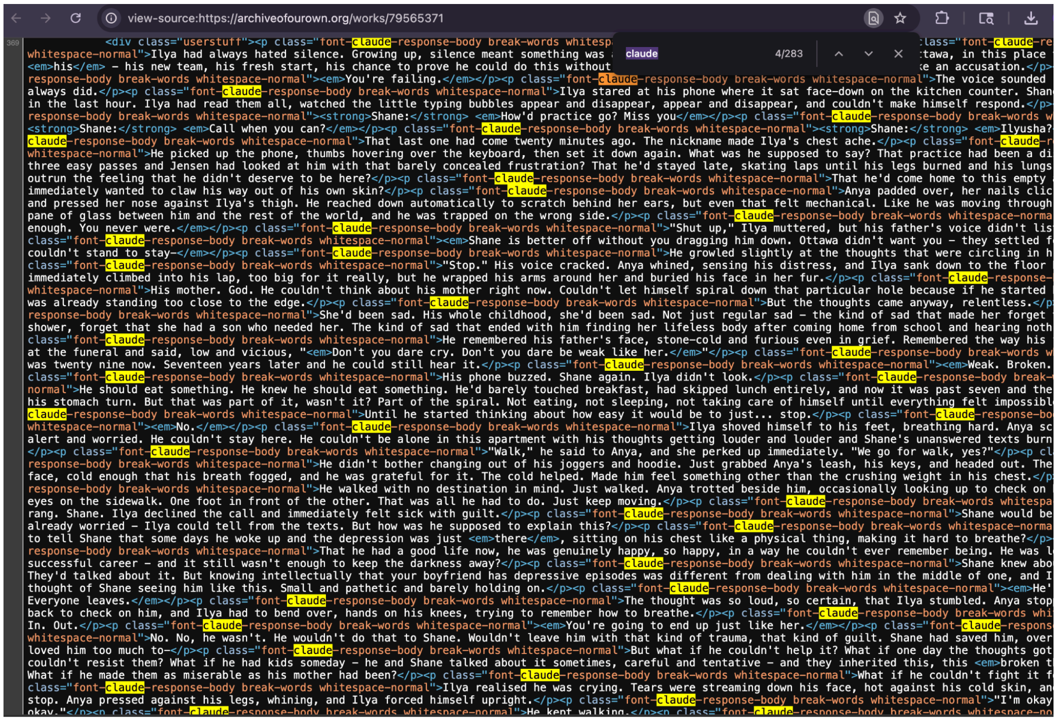
just_chemicals, “The Long Walk Home”

2,395 kudos, 20,355 hits, 6,450 words (283 instances)



```
            <div class="userstuff"><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitesp                               class="font-claude-re
whitespace-normal">Ilya had always hated silence. Growing up, silence meant something was                               tawa, in this place
<em>his</em> – his new team, his fresh start, his chance to prove he could do this without                               e an accusation.</p>
response-body break-words whitespace-normal"><em>You're failing.</em></p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">The voice sounded
always did.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Ilya stared at his phone where it sat face-down on the kitchen counter. Shan
in the last hour. Ilya had read them all, watched the little typing bubbles appear and disappear, appear and disappear, and couldn't make himself respond.</p>
response-body break-words whitespace-normal"><strong>Shane:</strong> <em>How'd practice go? Miss you</em></p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words w
<strong>Shane:</strong> <em>Call when you can?</em></p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal"><strong>Shane:</strong> <em>Ilyusha?
claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">That last one had come twenty minutes ago. The nickname made Ilya's chest ache.</p><p class="font-claude-r
whitespace-normal">He picked up the phone, thumbs hovering over the keyboard, then set it down again. What was he supposed to say? That practice had been a di
three easy passes and Jensen had looked at him with that barely concealed frustration? That he'd stayed late, skating laps until his legs burned and his lungs
outrun the feeling that he didn't deserve to be here?</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">That he'd come home to this empty
immediately wanted to claw his way out of his own skin?</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Anya padded over, her nails clic
and pressed her nose against Ilya's thigh. He reached down automatically to scratch behind her ears, but even that felt mechanical. Like he was moving through
pane of glass between him and the rest of the world, and he was trapped on the wrong side.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-norma
enough. You never were.</em></p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Shut up," Ilya muttered, but his father's voice didn't lis
class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal"><em>Shane is better off without you dragging him down. Ottawa didn't want you – they settled f
couldn't stand to stay–</em></p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">He growled slightly at the thoughts that were circling in h
class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Stop." His voice cracked. Anya whined, sensing his distress, and Ilya sank down to the floor
immediately climbed into his lap, too big for it really, but he wrapped his arms around her and buried his face in her fur.</p><p class="font-claude-response-
whitespace-normal">His mother. God. He couldn't think about his mother right now. Couldn't let himself spiral down that particular hole because if he started
was already standing too close to the edge.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">But the thoughts came anyway, relentless.</p
response-body break-words whitespace-normal">She'd been sad. His whole childhood, she'd been sad. Not just regular sad – the kind of sad that made her forget
shower, forget that she had a son who needed her. The kind of sad that ended with him finding her lifeless body after coming home from school and hearing noth
class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">He remembered his father's face, stone-cold and furious even in grief. Remembered the way his
at the funeral and said, low and vicious, "<em>Don't you dare cry. Don't you dare be weak like her.</em>"</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words w
was twenty nine now. Seventeen years later and he could still hear it.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal"><em>Weak. Broken.
class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">His phone buzzed. Shane again. Ilya didn't look.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-
normal">He should eat something. He knew he should eat something. He'd barely touched breakfast, had skipped lunch entirely, and now it was past seven and the
his stomach turn. But that was part of it, wasn't it? Part of the spiral. Not eating, not sleeping, not taking care of himself until everything felt impossibl
claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Until he started thinking about how easy it would be to just... stop.</p><p class="font-claude-response-bo
whitespace-normal"><em>No.</em></p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Ilya shoved himself to his feet, breathing hard. Anya sc
alert and worried. He couldn't stay here. He couldn't be alone in this apartment with his thoughts getting louder and louder and Shane's unanswered texts burn
</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Walk," he said to Anya, and she perked up immediately. "We go for walk, yes?"</p><p cl
response-body break-words whitespace-normal">He didn't bother changing out of his joggers and hoodie. Just grabbed Anya's leash, his keys, and headed out. The
face, cold enough that his breath fogged, and he was grateful for it. The cold helped. Made him feel something other than the crushing weight in his chest.</p
response-body break-words whitespace-normal">He walked with no destination in mind. Just walked. Anya trotted beside him, occasionally looking up to check on
eyes on the sidewalk. One foot in front of the other. That was all he had to do. Just keep moving.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespa
rang. Shane. Ilya declined the call and immediately felt sick with guilt.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane would be
already worried – Ilya could tell from the texts. But how was he supposed to explain this?</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-norma
to tell Shane that some days he woke up and the depression was just <em>there</em>, sitting on his chest like a physical thing, making it hard to breathe?</p>
response-body break-words whitespace-normal">That he had a good life now, he was genuinely happy, so happy, in a way he couldn't ever remember being. He was l
successful career – and it still wasn't enough to keep the darkness away?</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane knew abo
They'd talked about it. But knowing intellectually that your boyfriend has depressive episodes was different from dealing with him in the middle of one, and I
thought of Shane seeing him like this. Small and pathetic and barely holding on.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal"><em>He'
Everyone leaves.</em></p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">The thought was so loud, so certain, that Ilya stumbled. Anya stop
back to check on him, and Ilya had to bend over, hands on his knees, trying to remember how to breathe.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whi
In. Out.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal"><em>You're going to end up just like her.</em></p><p class="font-claude-respons
whitespace-normal">No. No, he wasn't. He wouldn't do that to Shane. Wouldn't leave him with that kind of trauma, that kind of guilt. Shane had saved him, over
loved him too much to–</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">But what if he couldn't help it? What if one day the thoughts got
couldn't resist them? What if he had kids someday – he and Shane talked about it sometimes, careful and tentative – and they inherited this, this <em>broken t
What if he made them as miserable as his mother had been?</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">What if he couldn't fight it f
class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Ilya realised he was crying. Tears were streaming down his face, hot against his cold skin, an
stop. Anya pressed against his legs, whining, and Ilya forced himself upright.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"I'm okay
okay."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">He kept walking.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-no
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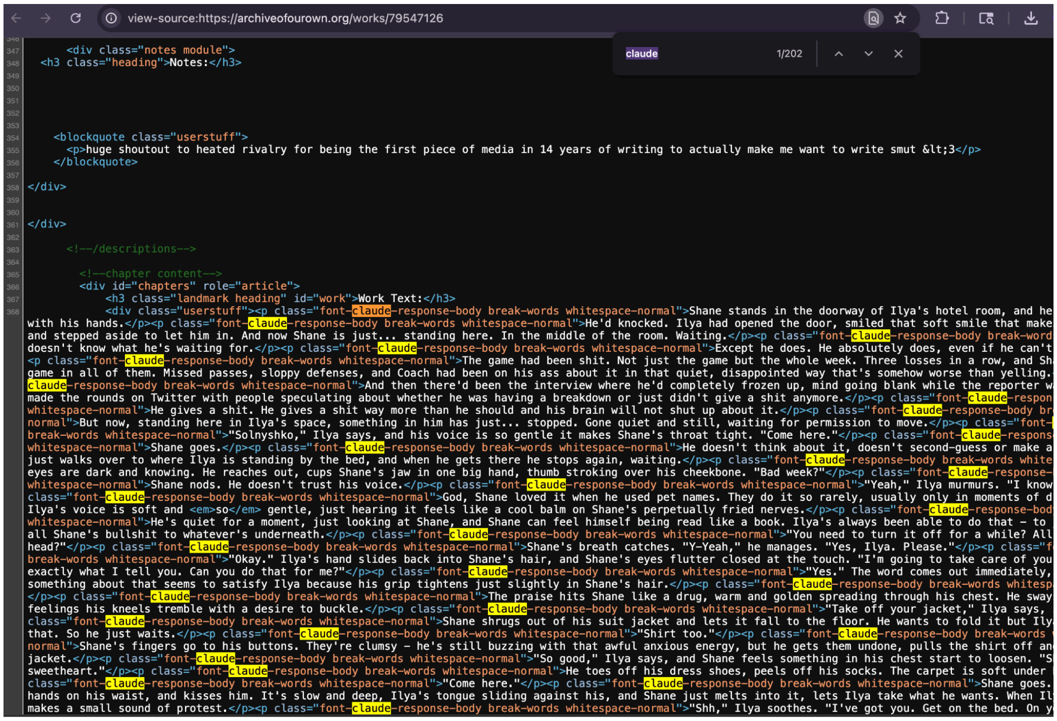
just_chemicals, “Trust Fall”

1,119 kudos, 15,847 hits, 4,663 words (202 instances)



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        <div class="notes module">
  <h3 class="heading">Notes:</h3>




      <blockquote class="userstuff">
        <p>huge shoutout to heated rivalry for being the first piece of media in 14 years of writing to actually make me want to write smut &lt;3</p>
      </blockquote>

</div>


</div>

        <!--/descriptions-->

          <!--chapter content-->
          <div id="chapters" role="article">
              <h3 class="landmark heading" id="work">Work Text:</h3>
              <div class="userstuff"><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane stands in the doorway of Ilya's hotel room, and he
with his hands.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">He'd knocked. Ilya had opened the door, smiled that soft smile that make
and stepped aside to let him in. And now Shane is just... standing here. In the middle of the room. Waiting.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-word
doesn't know what he's waiting for.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Except he does. He absolutely does, even if he can't
<p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">The game had been shit. Not just the game but the whole week. Three losses in a row, and Sh
game in all of them. Missed passes, sloppy defenses, and Coach had been on his ass about it in that quiet, disappointed way that's somehow worse than yelling.
claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">And then there'd been the interview where he'd completely frozen up, mind going blank while the reporter w
made the rounds on Twitter with people speculating about whether he was having a breakdown or just didn't give a shit anymore.</p><p class="font-claude-respon
whitespace-normal">He gives a shit. He gives a shit way more than he should and his brain will not shut up about it.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body br
normal">But now, standing here in Ilya's space, something in him has just... stopped. Gone quiet and still, waiting for permission to move.</p><p class="font-
break-words whitespace-normal">"Solnyshko," Ilya says, and his voice is so gentle it makes Shane's throat tight. "Come here."</p><p class="font-claude-respons
whitespace-normal">Shane goes.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">He doesn't think about it, doesn't second-guess or make a
just walks over to where Ilya is standing by the bed, and when he gets there he stops again, waiting.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words white
eyes are dark and knowing. He reaches out, cups Shane's jaw in one big hand, thumb stroking over his cheekbone. "Bad week?"</p><p class="font-claude-response-
whitespace-normal">Shane nods. He doesn't trust his voice.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Yeah," Ilya murmurs. "I know
class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">God, Shane loved it when he used pet names. They do it so rarely, usually only in moments of d
Ilya's voice is soft and <em>so</em> gentle, just hearing it feels like a cool balm on Shane's perpetually fried nerves.</p><p class="font-claude-response-bod
whitespace-normal">He's quiet for a moment, just looking at Shane, and Shane can feel himself being read like a book. Ilya's always been able to do that – to
all Shane's bullshit to whatever's underneath.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"You need to turn it off for a while? All
head?"</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane's breath catches. "Y-Yeah," he manages. "Yes, Ilya. Please."</p><p class="f
break-words whitespace-normal">"Okay." Ilya's hand slides back into Shane's hair, and Shane's eyes flutter closed at the touch. "I'm going to take care of you
exactly what I tell you. Can you do that for me?"</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Yes." The word comes out immediately,
something about that seems to satisfy Ilya because his grip tightens just slightly in Shane's hair.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitesp
</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">The praise hits Shane like a drug, warm and golden spreading through his chest. He sway
feelings his kneels tremble with a desire to buckle.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Take off your jacket," Ilya says,
class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane shrugs out of his suit jacket and lets it fall to the floor. He wants to fold it but Ily
that. So he just waits.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Shirt too."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words
normal">Shane's fingers go to his buttons. They're clumsy – he's still buzzing with that awful anxious energy, but he gets them undone, pulls the shirt off an
jacket.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"So good," Ilya says, and Shane feels something in his chest start to loosen. "S
sweetheart."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">He toes off his dress shoes, peels off his socks. The carpet is soft under
class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Come here."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane goes.
hands on his waist, and kisses him. It's slow and deep, Ilya's tongue sliding against his, and Shane just melts into it, lets Ilya take what he wants. When Il
makes a small sound of protest.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Shh," Ilya soothes. "I've got you. Get on the bed. On y
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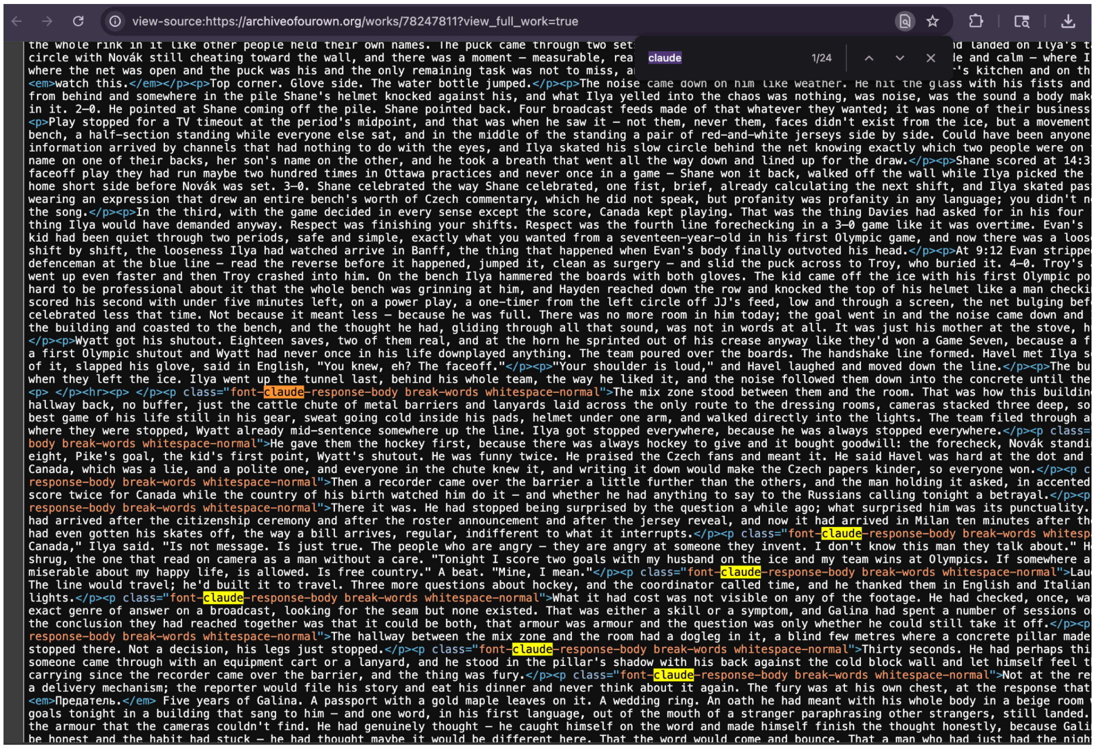
Kiyominox, “The Weight of Red and White”

837 kudos, 31,001 hits, 78,888 words (24 instances)


view-source:https://archiveofourown.org/works/78247811?view_full_work=true
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1/24

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the whole rink in it like other people held their own names. The puck came through two set                    nd landed on Ilya's t
circle with Novák still cheating toward the wall, and there was a moment – measurable, rea                     le and calm – where I
where the net was open and the puck was his and the only remaining task was not to miss, a                     's kitchen and on th
<em>watch this.</em></p><p>Top corner. Glove side. The water bottle jumped.</p><p>The noise came down on him like weather. He hit the glass with his fists and
from behind and somewhere in the pile Shane's helmet knocked against his, and what Ilya yelled into the chaos was nothing, was noise, was the sound a body mak
in it. 2–0. He pointed at Shane coming off the pile. Shane pointed back. Four broadcast feeds made of that whatever they wanted; it was none of their business
<p>Play stopped for a TV timeout at the period's midpoint, and that was when he saw it – not them, never them, faces didn't exist from the ice, but a movement
bench, a half-section standing while everyone else sat, and in the middle of the standing a pair of red-and-white jerseys side by side. Could have been anyone
information arrived by channels that had nothing to do with the eyes, and Ilya skated his slow circle behind the net knowing exactly which two people were on
name on one of their backs, her son's name on the other, and he took a breath that went all the way down and lined up for the draw.</p><p>Shane scored at 14:3
faceoff play they had run maybe two hundred times in Ottawa practices and never once in a game – Shane won it back, walked off the wall while Ilya picked the
home short side before Novák was set. 3–0. Shane celebrated the way Shane celebrated, one fist, brief, already calculating the next shift, and Ilya skated pas
wearing an expression that drew an entire bench's worth of Czech commentary, which he did not speak, but profanity was profanity in any language; you didn't n
the song.</p><p>In the third, with the game decided in every sense except the score, Canada kept playing. That was the thing Davies had asked for in his four
thing Ilya would have demanded anyway. Respect was finishing your shifts. Respect was the fourth line forechecking in a 3–0 game like it was overtime. Evan's
kid had been quiet through two periods, safe and simple, exactly what you wanted from a seventeen-year-old in his first Olympic game, and now there was a loos
shift by shift, the looseness Ilya had watched arrive in Banff, the thing that happened when Evan's body finally outvoted his head.</p><p>At 9:12 Evan strippe
defenceman at the blue line – read the reverse before it happened, jumped it, clean as surgery – and slid the puck across to Troy, who buried it. 4–0. Troy's
went up even faster and then Troy crashed into him. On the bench Ilya hammered the boards with both gloves. The kid came off the ice with his first Olympic po
hard to be professional about it that the whole bench was grinning at him, and Hayden reached down the row and knocked the top of his helmet like a man checki
scored his second with under five minutes left, on a power play, a one-timer from the left circle off JJ's feed, low and through a screen, the net bulging bef
celebrated less that time. Not because it meant less – because he was full. There was no more room in him today; the goal went in and the noise came down and
the building and coasted to the bench, and the thought he had, gliding through all that sound, was not in words at all. It was just his mother at the stove, h
</p><p>Wyatt got his shutout. Eighteen saves, two of them real, and at the horn he sprinted out of his crease anyway like they'd won a Game Seven, because a f
a first Olympic shutout and Wyatt had never once in his life downplayed anything. The team poured over the boards. The handshake line formed. Havel met Ilya s
of it, slapped his glove, said in English, "You knew, eh? The faceoff."</p><p>"Your shoulder is loud," and Havel laughed and moved down the line.</p><p>The bu
when they left the ice. Ilya went up the tunnel last, behind his whole team, the way he liked it, and the noise followed them down into the concrete until the
<p> </p><hr><p> </p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">The mix zone stood between them and the room. That was how this buildin
hallway back, no buffer, just the cattle chute of metal barriers and lanyards laid across the only route to the dressing rooms, cameras stacked three deep, so
best game of his life still in his gear, sweat going cold inside his pads, helmet under one arm, and walked directly into the lights. The team filed through a
where they were stopped, Wyatt already mid-sentence somewhere up the line. Ilya got stopped everywhere, because he was always stopped everywhere.</p><p class=
body break-words whitespace-normal">He gave them the hockey first, because there was always hockey to give and it bought goodwill: the forecheck, Novák standi
eight, Pike's goal, the kid's first point, Wyatt's shutout. He was funny twice. He praised the Czech fans and meant it. He said Havel was hard at the dot and
Canada, which was a lie, and a polite one, and everyone in the chute knew it, and writing it down would make the Czech papers kinder, so everyone won.</p><p c
response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Then a recorder came over the barrier a little further than the others, and the man holding it asked, in accented
score twice for Canada while the country of his birth watched him do it – and whether he had anything to say to the Russians calling tonight a betrayal.</p><p
response-body break-words whitespace-normal">There it was. He had stopped being surprised by the question a while ago; what surprised him was its punctuality.
had arrived after the citizenship ceremony and after the roster announcement and after the jersey reveal, and now it had arrived in Milan ten minutes after th
had even gotten his skates off, the way a bill arrives, regular, indifferent to what it interrupts.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitesp
Canada," Ilya said. "Is not message. Is just true. The people who are angry – they are angry at someone they invent. I don't know this man they talk about." H
shrug, the one that read on camera as a man without a care. "Tonight I score two goals with my husband on the ice and my team wins at Olympics. If somewhere a
miserable about my happy life, is allowed. Is free country." A beat. "Mine, I mean."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Lau
The line would travel; he'd built it to travel. Three more questions about hockey, and the coordinator called time, and he thanked them in English and Italian
lights.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">What it had cost was not visible on any of the footage. He had checked, once, wa
exact genre of answer on a broadcast, looking for the seam but none existed. That was either a skill or a symptom, and Galina had spent a number of sessions o
the conclusion they had reached together was that it could be both, that armour was armour and the question was only whether he could still take it off.</p><p
response-body break-words whitespace-normal">The hallway between the mix zone and the room had a dogleg in it, a blind few metres where a concrete pillar made
stopped there. Not a decision, his legs just stopped.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Thirty seconds. He had perhaps thi
someone came through with an equipment cart or a lanyard, and he stood in the pillar's shadow with his back against the cold block wall and let himself feel t
carrying since the recorder came over the barrier, and the thing was fury.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Not at the re
a delivery mechanism; the reporter would file his story and eat his dinner and never think about it again. The fury was at his own chest, at the response that
<em>Предатель.</em> Five years of Galina. A passport with a gold maple leaves on it. A wedding ring. An oath he had meant with his whole body in a beige room
goals tonight in a building that sang to him – and one word, in his first language, out of the mouth of a stranger paraphrasing other strangers, still landed.
the armour that the cameras couldn't find. He had genuinely thought – he caught himself on the word and made himself finish the thought honestly, because Gali
be honest and the habit had stuck – he had thought maybe it would be different here. That the word would come and bounce. That a man who had just had the nigh
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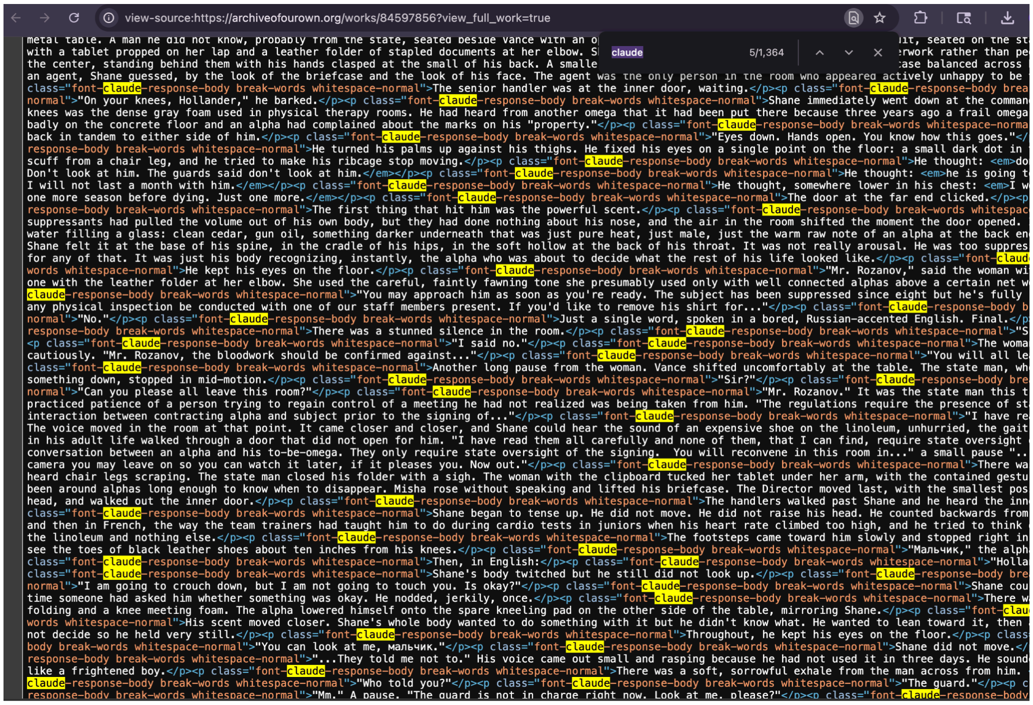
Little_Flower43, “Atypical Russian Alpha”

2,975 kudos, 79,665 hits, 74,256 words (1,300+ instances)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5/1,364

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metal table. A man he did not know, probably from the state, seated beside Vance with an o                    lit, seated on the st
with a tablet propped on her lap and a leather folder of stapled documents at her elbow. Sl                    erwork rather than pe
the center, standing behind them with his hands clasped at the small of his back. A smalle                     case balanced across
an agent, Shane guessed, by the look of the briefcase and the look of his face. The agent was the only person in the room who appeared actively unhappy to be
class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">The senior handler was at the inner door, waiting.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body brea
normal">"On your knees, Hollander," he barked.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane immediately went down at the comman
knees was the dense gray foam used in physical therapy rooms. He had heard from another omega that it had been put there because three years ago a frail omega
badly on the concrete floor and an alpha had complained about the marks on his "property."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-norma
back in tandem to either side of him.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Eyes down. Hands open. You know how this goes."</
response-body break-words whitespace-normal">He turned his palms up against his thighs. He fixed his eyes on a single point on the floor: a small dark dot in
scuff from a chair leg, and he tried to make his ribcage stop moving.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">He thought: <em>do
Don't look at him. The guards said don't look at him.</em></p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">He thought: <em>he is going t
I will not last a month with him.</em></p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">He thought, somewhere lower in his chest: <em>I w
one more season before dying. Just one more.</em></p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">The door at the far end clicked.</p><p
response-body break-words whitespace-normal">The first thing that hit him was the powerful scent.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespac
suppressants had pulled the volume out of his own body, but they had done nothing about his nose, and the air in the room shifted the moment the door opened.
water filling a glass: clean cedar, gun oil, something darker underneath that was just pure heat, just male, just the warm raw note of an alpha at the back en
Shane felt it at the base of his spine, in the cradle of his hips, in the soft hollow at the back of his throat. It was not really arousal. He was too suppres
for any of that. It was just his body recognizing, instantly, the alpha who was about to decide what the rest of his life looked like.</p><p class="font-claud
words whitespace-normal">He kept his eyes on the floor.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Mr. Rozanov," said the woman wi
one with the leather folder at her elbow. She used the careful, faintly fawning tone she presumably used only with well connected alphas above a certain net w
claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"You may approach him as soon as you're ready. The subject has been suppressed since eight but he's fully
any physical inspection be conducted with one of our staff members present. If you'd like to remove his shirt for..."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body b
normal">"No."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Just a single word, spoken in a bored, Russian-accented English. Final.</p
response-body break-words whitespace-normal">There was a stunned silence in the room.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"S
<p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"I said no."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">The woma
cautiously. "Mr. Rozanov, the bloodwork should be confirmed against..."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"You will all lea
class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Another long pause from the woman. Vance shifted uncomfortably at the table. The state man, wh
something down, stopped in mid-motion.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Sir?"</p><p class="font-claude-response-body bre
normal">"Can you please all leave this room?"</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Mr. Rozanov." It was the state man this t
practiced patience of a person trying to regain control of a meeting he had not realized was being taken from him. "The regulations require the presence of st
interaction between contracting alpha and subject prior to the signing of..."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"I have re
The voice moved in the room at that point. It came closer and closer, and Shane could hear the sound of an expensive shoe on the linoleum, unhurried, the gait
in his adult life walked through a door that did not open for him. "I have read them all carefully and none of them, that I can find, require state oversight
conversation between an alpha and his to-be-omega. They only require state oversight of the signing.  You will reconvene in this room in..." a small pause "..
camera you may leave on so you can watch it later, if it pleases you. Now out."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">There wa
heard chair legs scraping. The state man closed his folder with a sigh. The woman with the clipboard tucked her tablet under her arm, with the contained gestu
been around alphas long enough to know when to disappear. Misha rose without speaking and lifted his briefcase. The Director moved last, with the smallest pos
head, and walked out the inner door.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">The handlers walked past Shane and he heard the inne
class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane began to tense up. He did not move. He did not raise his head. He counted backwards from
and then in French, the way the team trainers had taught him to do during cardio tests in juniors when his heart rate climbed too high, and he tried to think
the linoleum and nothing else.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">The footsteps came toward him slowly and stopped right in
see the toes of black leather shoes about ten inches from his knees.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Мальчик," the alph
class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Then, in English:</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Hollar
class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane's body twitched but he still did not look up.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body bre
normal">"I am going to crouch down, but I am not going to touch you. Is okay?"</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane cou
time someone had asked him whether something was okay. He nodded, jerkily, once.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">There w
folding and a knee meeting foam. The alpha lowered himself onto the spare kneeling pad on the other side of the table, mirroring Shane.</p><p class="font-clau
words whitespace-normal">His scent moved closer. Shane's whole body wanted to do something with it but he didn't know what. He wanted to lean toward it, then
not decide so he held very still.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Throughout, he kept his eyes on the floor.</p><p class=
body break-words whitespace-normal">"You can look at me, мальчик."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane did not move.</
response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"...They told me not to." His voice came out small and rasping because he had not used it in three days. He sounde
like a frightened boy.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">There was a soft, sorrowful exhale from the man across from him.
claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Who told you?"</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"The guard."</p><p c
response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Mm." A pause. "The guard is not in charge right now. Look at me, please?"</p><p class="font-claude-response-body
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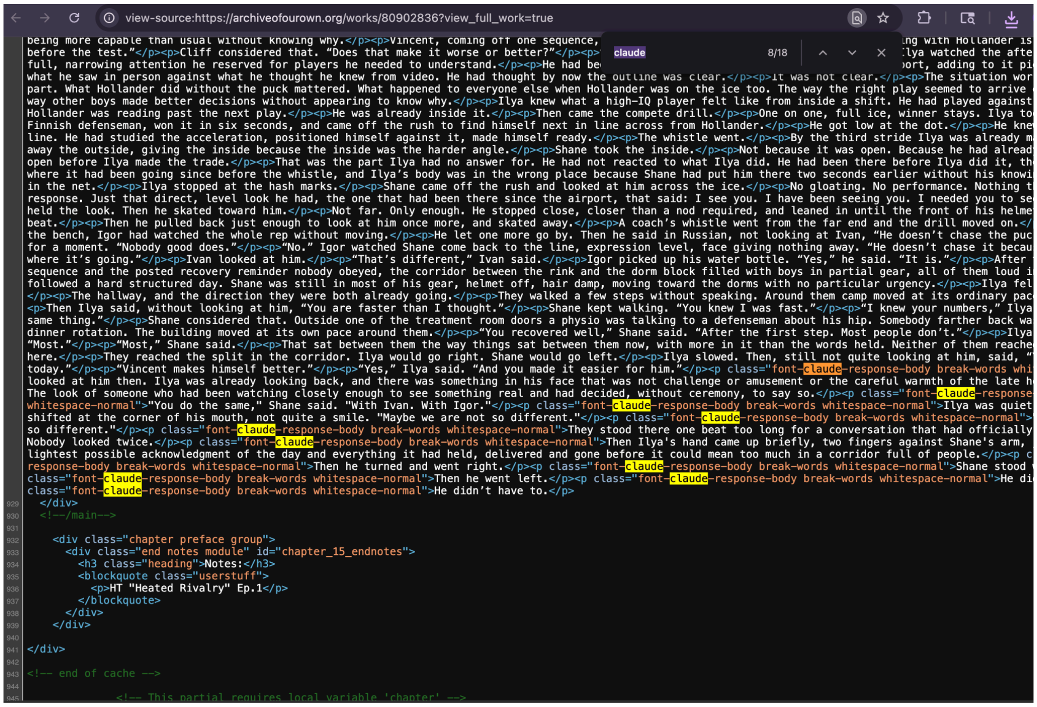
LK1221, “The Summer Before”

728 kudos, 28,997 hits, 107,868 words (18 instances)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claude
8/18

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being more capable than usual without knowing why.</p><p>Vincent, coming off one sequence,                    ing with Hollander is
before the test.”</p><p>Cliff considered that. “Does that make it worse or better?”</p><p>                    Ilya watched the afte
full, narrowing attention he reserved for players he needed to understand.</p><p>He had bee                     port, adding to it pi
what he saw in person against what he thought he knew from video. He had thought by now the outline was clear.</p><p>It was not clear.</p><p>The situation wor
part. What Hollander did without the puck mattered. What happened to everyone else when Hollander was on the ice too. The way the right play seemed to arrive
way other boys made better decisions without appearing to know why.</p><p>Ilya knew what a high-IQ player felt like from inside a shift. He had played against
Hollander was reading past the next play.</p><p>He was already inside it.</p><p>Then came the compete drill.</p><p>One on one, full ice, winner stays. Ilya to
Finnish defenseman, won it in six seconds, and came off the rush to find himself next in line across from Hollander.</p><p>He got low at the dot.</p><p>He kne
line. He had studied the acceleration, positioned himself against it, made himself ready.</p><p>The whistle went.</p><p>By the third stride Ilya was already m
away the outside, giving the inside because the inside was the harder angle.</p><p>Shane took the inside.</p><p>Not because it was open. Because he had alread
open before Ilya made the trade.</p><p>That was the part Ilya had no answer for. He had not reacted to what Ilya did. He had been there before Ilya did it, th
where it had been going since before the whistle, and Ilya’s body was in the wrong place because Shane had put him there two seconds earlier without his knowi
in the net.</p><p>Ilya stopped at the hash marks.</p><p>Shane came off the rush and looked at him across the ice.</p><p>No gloating. No performance. Nothing t
response. Just that direct, level look he had, the one that had been there since the airport, that said: I see you. I have been seeing you. I needed you to se
held the look. Then he skated toward him.</p><p>Not far. Only enough. He stopped close, closer than a nod required, and leaned in until the front of his helme
beat.</p><p>Then he pulled back just enough to look at him once more, and skated away.</p><p>A coach’s whistle went from the far end and the drill moved on.</
the bench, Igor had watched the whole rep without moving.</p><p>He let one more go by. Then he said in Russian, not looking at Ivan, “He doesn’t chase the puc
for a moment. “Nobody good does.”</p><p>“No.” Igor watched Shane come back to the line, expression level, face giving nothing away. “He doesn’t chase it becau
where it’s going.”</p><p>Ivan looked at him.</p><p>“That’s different,” Ivan said.</p><p>Igor picked up his water bottle. “Yes,” he said. “It is.”</p><p>After
sequence and the posted recovery reminder nobody obeyed, the corridor between the rink and the dorm block filled with boys in partial gear, all of them loud i
followed a hard structured day. Shane was still in most of his gear, helmet off, hair damp, moving toward the dorms with no particular urgency.</p><p>Ilya fel
</p><p>The hallway, and the direction they were both already going.</p><p>They walked a few steps without speaking. Around them camp moved at its ordinary pac
<p>Then Ilya said, without looking at him, “You are faster than I thought.”</p><p>Shane kept walking. “You knew I was fast.”</p><p>“I knew your numbers,” Ilya
same thing.”</p><p>Shane considered that. Outside one of the treatment room doors a physio was talking to a defenseman about his hip. Somebody farther back wa
dinner rotation. The building moved at its own pace around them.</p><p>“You recovered well,” Shane said. “After the first step. Most people don’t.”</p><p>Ilya
“Most.”</p><p>“Most,” Shane said.</p><p>That sat between them the way things sat between them now, with more in it than the words held. Neither of them reache
here.</p><p>They reached the split in the corridor. Ilya would go right. Shane would go left.</p><p>Ilya slowed. Then, still not quite looking at him, said, “
today.”</p><p>“Vincent makes himself better.”</p><p>“Yes,” Ilya said. “And you made it easier for him.”</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whi
looked at him then. Ilya was already looking back, and there was something in his face that was not challenge or amusement or the careful warmth of the late h
The look of someone who had been watching closely enough to see something real and had decided, without ceremony, to say so.</p><p class="font-claude-response
whitespace-normal">"You do the same," Shane said. "With Ivan. With Igor."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Ilya was quiet
shifted at the corner of his mouth, not quite a smile. "Maybe we are not so different."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">
so different."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">They stood there one beat too long for a conversation that had officially
Nobody looked twice.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Then Ilya's hand came up briefly, two fingers against Shane's arm,
lightest possible acknowledgment of the day and everything it had held, delivered and gone before it could mean too much in a corridor full of people.</p><p c
response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Then he turned and went right.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane stood
class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Then he went left.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">He di
class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">He didn’t have to.</p>
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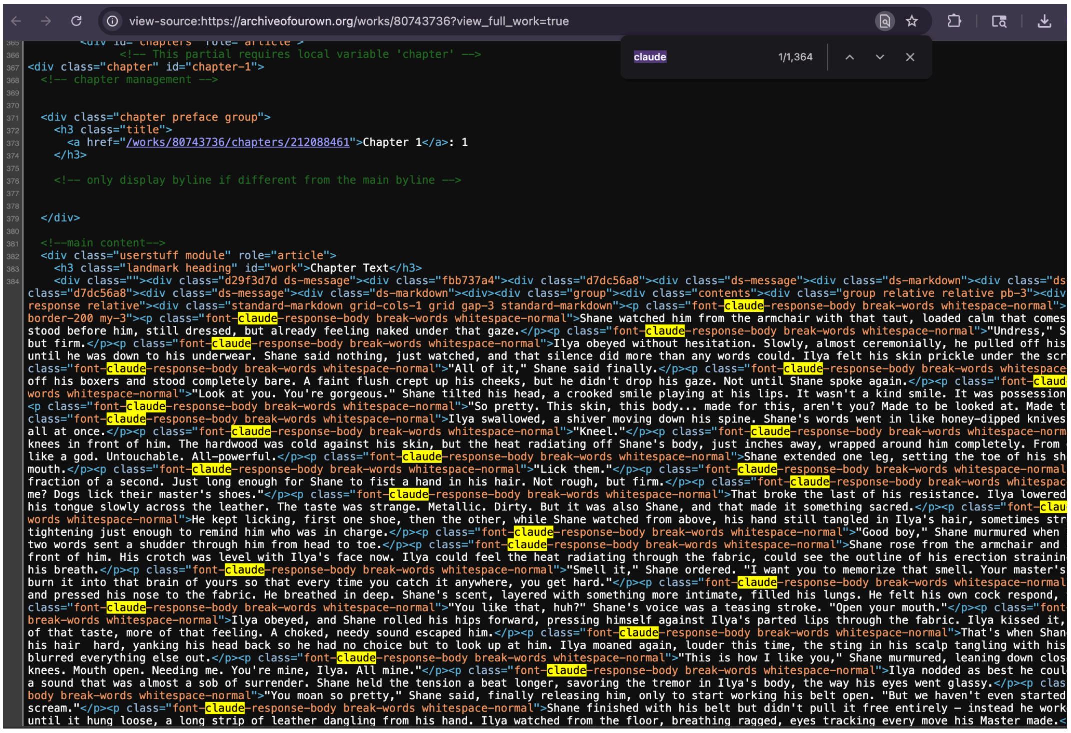
Lost_childe (tamy_blue), tamy_blue, “Five Hours”

606 kudos, 22,255 hits, 40,562 words (1,364 instances)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claude
1/1,364

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border-200 my-3"><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane watched him from the armchair with that taut, loaded calm that comes
stood before him, still dressed, but already feeling naked under that gaze.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Undress," S
but firm.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Ilya obeyed without hesitation. Slowly, almost ceremonially, he pulled off his
until he was down to his underwear. Shane said nothing, just watched, and that silence did more than any words could. Ilya felt his skin prickle under the scr
class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"All of it," Shane said finally.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace
off his boxers and stood completely bare. A faint flush crept up his cheeks, but he didn't drop his gaze. Not until Shane spoke again.</p><p class="font-claud
words whitespace-normal">"Look at you. You're gorgeous." Shane tilted his head, a crooked smile playing at his lips. It wasn't a kind smile. It was possession
<p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"So pretty. This skin, this body... made for this, aren't you? Made to be looked at. Made t
class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Ilya swallowed, a shiver moving down his spine. Shane's words went in like honey-dipped knives
all at once.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Kneel."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-norm
knees in front of him. The hardwood was cold against his skin, but the heat radiating off Shane's body, just inches away, wrapped around him completely. From
like a god. Untouchable. All-powerful.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane extended one leg, setting the toe of his sh
mouth.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Lick them."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal
fraction of a second. Just long enough for Shane to fist a hand in his hair. Not rough, but firm.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespac
me? Dogs lick their master's shoes."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">That broke the last of his resistance. Ilya lowered
his tongue slowly across the leather. The taste was strange. Metallic. Dirty. But it was also Shane, and that made it something sacred.</p><p class="font-clau
words whitespace-normal">He kept licking, first one shoe, then the other, while Shane watched from above, his hand still tangled in Ilya's hair, sometimes str
tightening just enough to remind him who was in charge.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Good boy," Shane murmured when
two words sent a shudder through him from head to toe.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane rose from the armchair and
front of him. His crotch was level with Ilya's face now. Ilya could feel the heat radiating through the fabric, could see the outline of his erection strainin
his breath.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Smell it," Shane ordered. "I want you to memorize that smell. Your master's
burn it into that brain of yours so that every time you catch it anywhere, you get hard."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal
and pressed his nose to the fabric. He breathed in deep. Shane's scent, layered with something more intimate, filled his lungs. He felt his own cock respond,
class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"You like that, huh?" Shane's voice was a teasing stroke. "Open your mouth."</p><p class="font
break-words whitespace-normal">Ilya obeyed, and Shane rolled his hips forward, pressing himself against Ilya's parted lips through the fabric. Ilya kissed it,
of that taste, more of that feeling. A choked, needy sound escaped him.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">That's when Shan
his hair  hard, yanking his head back so he had no choice but to look up at him. Ilya moaned again, louder this time, the sting in his scalp tangling with his
blurred everything else out.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"This is how I like you," Shane murmured, leaning down clos
knees. Mouth open. Needing me. You're mine, Ilya. All mine."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Ilya nodded as best he coul
a sound that was almost a sob of surrender. Shane held the tension a beat longer, savoring the tremor in Ilya's body, the way his eyes went glassy.</p><p clas
body break-words whitespace-normal">"You moan so pretty," Shane said, finally releasing him, only to start working his belt open. "But we haven't even started
scream."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane finished with his belt but didn't pull it free entirely – instead he work
until it hung loose, a long strip of leather dangling from his hand. Ilya watched from the floor, breathing ragged, eyes tracking every move his Master made.<
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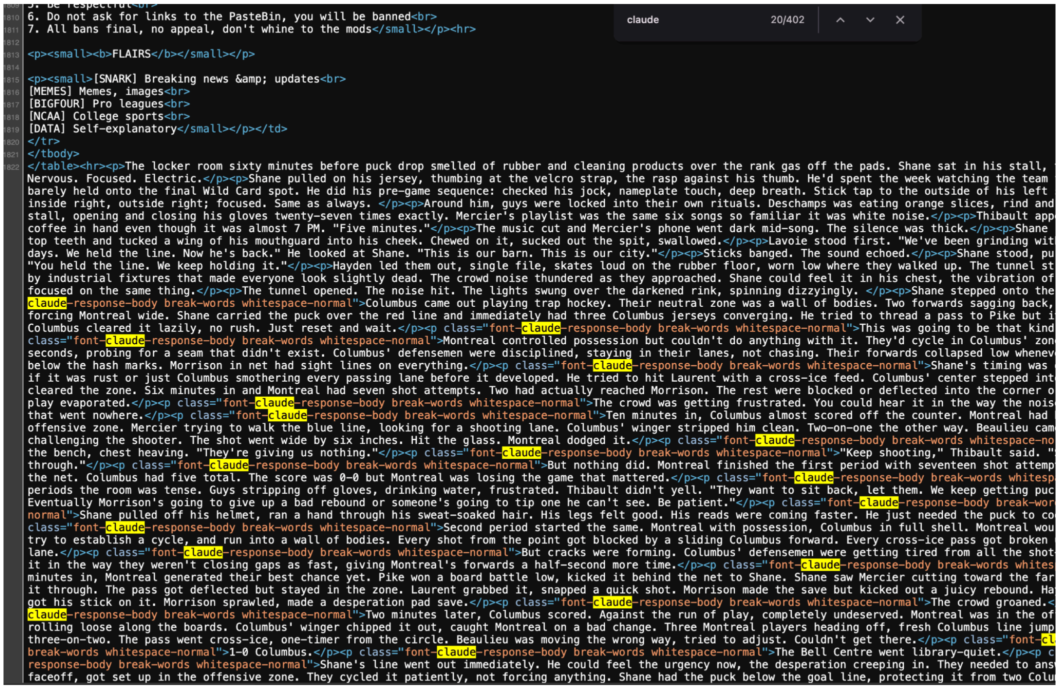
mashawisotsky, “Halt and Catch Fire” (HTML download only)

(*Note*: This fic is currently in a hidden collection. A previously downloaded copy contains 402 instances of “Claude.”)



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5. Be respectful<br>
6. Do not ask for links to the PasteBin, you will be banned<br>
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<p><small><b>FLAIRS</b></small></p>

<p><small>[SNARK] Breaking news &amp; updates<br>
[MEMES] Memes, images<br>
[BIGFOUR] Pro leagues<br>
[NCAA] College sports<br>
[DATA] Self-explanatory</small></p></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table><hr><p>The locker room sixty minutes before puck drop smelled of rubber and cleaning products over the rank gas off the pads. Shane sat in his stall,
Nervous. Focused. Electric.</p><p>Shane pulled on his jersey, thumbing at the velcro strap, the rasp against his thumb. He'd spent the week watching the team
barely held onto the final Wild Card spot. He did his pre-game sequence: checked his jock, nameplate touch, deep breath. Stick tap to the outside of his left
inside right, outside right; focused. Same as always. </p><p>Around him, guys were locked into their own rituals. Deschamps was eating orange slices, rind and
stall, opening and closing his gloves twenty-seven times exactly. Mercier's playlist was the same six songs so familiar it was white noise.</p><p>Thibault app
coffee in hand even though it was almost 7 PM. "Five minutes."</p><p>The music cut and Mercier's phone went dark mid-song. The silence was thick.</p><p>Shane
top teeth and tucked a wing of his mouthguard into his cheek. Chewed on it, sucked out the spit, swallowed.</p><p>Lavoie stood first. "We've been grinding wit
days. We held the line. Now he's back." He looked at Shane. "This is our barn. This is our city."</p><p>Sticks banged. The sound echoed.</p><p>Shane stood, pu
"You held the line. We keep holding it."</p><p>Hayden led them out, single file, skates loud on the rubber floor, worn low where they walked up. The tunnel st
by industrial fixtures that made everyone look slightly dead. The crowd noise thundered as they approached. Shane could feel it in his chest, the vibration of
focused on the same thing.</p><p>The tunnel opened. The noise hit. The lights swung over the darkened rink, spinning dizzyingly. </p><p>Shane stepped onto the
claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Columbus came out playing trap hockey. Their neutral zone was a wall of bodies. Two forwards sagging back,
forcing Montreal wide. Shane carried the puck over the red line and immediately had three Columbus jerseys converging. He tried to thread a pass to Pike but i
Columbus cleared it lazily, no rush. Just reset and wait.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">This was going to be that kind
class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Montreal controlled possession but couldn't do anything with it. They'd cycle in Columbus' zon
seconds, probing for a seam that didn't exist. Columbus' defensemen were disciplined, staying in their lanes, not chasing. Their forwards collapsed low wheneve
below the hash marks. Morrison in net had sight lines on everything.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane's timing was
if it was rust or just Columbus smothering every passing lane before it developed. He tried to hit Laurent with a cross-ice feed. Columbus' center stepped int
cleared the zone. Six minutes in and Montreal had seven shot attempts. Two had actually reached Morrison. The rest were blocked or deflected into the corner o
play evaporated.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">The crowd was getting frustrated. You could hear it in the way the nois
that went nowhere.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Ten minutes in, Columbus almost scored off the counter. Montreal had
offensive zone. Mercier trying to walk the blue line, looking for a shooting lane. Columbus' winger stripped him clean. Two-on-one the other way. Beaulieu cam
challenging the shooter. The shot went wide by six inches. Hit the glass. Montreal dodged it.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-no
the bench, chest heaving. "They're giving us nothing."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Keep shooting," Thibault said. "
through."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">But nothing did. Montreal finished the first period with seventeen shot attemp
the net. Columbus had five total. The score was 0-0 but Montreal was losing the game that mattered.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitesp
periods the room was tense. Guys stripping off gloves, drinking water, frustrated. Thibault didn't yell. "They want to sit back, let them. We keep getting puc
Eventually Morrison's going to give up a bad rebound or someone's going to tip one he can't see. Be patient."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-wor
normal">Shane pulled off his helmet, ran a hand through his sweat-soaked hair. His legs felt good. His reads were coming faster. He just needed the puck to co
class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Second period started the same. Montreal with possession, Columbus in full shell. Montreal wou
try to establish a cycle, and run into a wall of bodies. Every shot from the point got blocked by a sliding Columbus forward. Every cross-ice pass got broken
lane.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">But cracks were forming. Columbus' defensemen were getting tired from all the shot
it in the way they weren't closing gaps as fast, giving Montreal's forwards a half-second more time.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whites
minutes in, Montreal generated their best chance yet. Pike won a board battle low, kicked it behind the net to Shane. Shane saw Mercier cutting toward the far
it through. The pass got deflected but stayed in the zone. Laurent grabbed it, snapped a quick shot. Morrison made the save but kicked out a juicy rebound. Ha
got his stick on it. Morrison sprawled, made a desperation pad save.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">The crowd groaned.<
claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Two minutes later, Columbus scored. Against the run of play, completely undeserved. Montreal was in the of
rolling loose along the boards. Columbus' winger chipped it out, caught Montreal on a bad change. Three Montreal players heading off, fresh Columbus line jump
three-on-two. The pass went cross-ice, one-timer from the circle. Beaulieu was moving the wrong way, tried to adjust. Couldn't get there.</p><p class="font-cl
break-words whitespace-normal">1-0 Columbus.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">The Bell Centre went library-quiet.</p><p c
response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane's line went out immediately. He could feel the urgency now, the desperation creeping in. They needed to ans
faceoff, got set up in the offensive zone. They cycled it patiently, not forcing anything. Shane had the puck below the goal line, protecting it from two Colu
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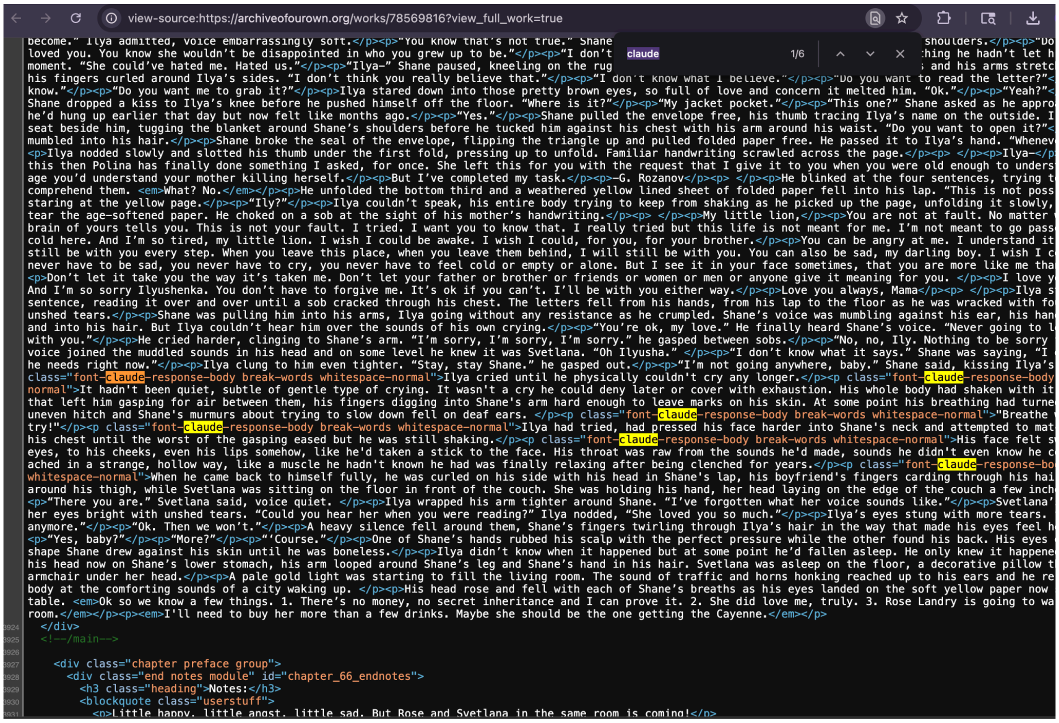
northrow, “A Reel”

10,161 kudos, 632,373 hits, 263,627 words (6 instances)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claude
1/6

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become.” Ilya admitted, voice embarrassingly soft.</p><p>“You know that’s not true.” Shane                               shoulders.</p><p>“Do
loved you. You know she wouldn’t be disappointed in who you grew up to be.”</p><p>“I don’t                              thing he hadn’t let h
moment. “She could’ve hated me. Hated us.”</p><p>“Ilya-” Shane paused, kneeling on the rug                              ; and his arms stretc
his fingers curled around Ilya’s sides. “I don’t think you really believe that.”</p><p>“I don’t know what I believe.”</p><p>“Do you want to read the letter?”<
know.”</p><p>“Do you want me to grab it?”</p><p>Ilya stared down into those pretty brown eyes, so full of love and concern it melted him. “Ok.”</p><p>“Yeah?”<
Shane dropped a kiss to Ilya’s knee before he pushed himself off the floor. “Where is it?”</p><p>“My jacket pocket.”</p><p>“This one?” Shane asked as he appro
he’d hung up earlier that day but now felt like months ago.</p><p>“Yes.”</p><p>Shane pulled the envelope free, his thumb tracing Ilya’s name on the outside. I
seat beside him, tugging the blanket around Shane’s shoulders before he tucked him against his chest with his arm around his waist. “Do you want to open it?”<
mumbled into his hair.</p><p>Shane broke the seal of the envelope, flipping the triangle up and pulled folded paper free. He passed it to Ilya’s hand. “Wheneve
<p>Ilya nodded slowly and slotted his thumb under the first fold, pressing up to unfold. Familiar handwriting scrawled across the page.</p><p> </p><p>Ilya-</p
this then Polina has finally done something I asked, for once. She left this for you with the request that I give it to you when you were old enough to unders
age you’d understand your mother killing herself.</p><p>But I’ve completed my task.</p><p>-G. Rozanov</p><p> </p><p>He blinked at the four sentences, trying t
comprehend them. <em>What? No.</em></p><p>He unfolded the bottom third and a weathered yellow lined sheet of folded paper fell into his lap. “This is not poss
staring at the yellow page.</p><p>“Ily?”</p><p>Ilya couldn’t speak, his entire body trying to keep from shaking as he picked up the page, unfolding it slowly,
tear the age-softened paper. He choked on a sob at the sight of his mother’s handwriting.</p><p> </p><p>My little lion,</p><p>You are not at fault. No matter
brain of yours tells you. This is not your fault. I tried. I want you to know that. I really tried but this life is not meant for me. I’m not meant to go pass
cold here. And I’m so tired, my little lion. I wish I could be awake. I wish I could, for you, for your brother.</p><p>You can be angry at me. I understand it
still be with you every step. When you leave this place, when you leave them behind, I will still be with you. You can also be sad, my darling boy. I wish I c
never have to be sad, you never have to cry, you never have to feel cold or empty or alone. But I see it in your face sometimes, that you are more like me tha
<p>Don’t let it take you the way it’s taken me. Don’t let your father or brother or friends or women or men or anyone give it meaning for you. </p><p>I love y
And I’m so sorry Ilyushenka. You don’t have to forgive me. It’s ok if you can’t. I’ll be with you either way.</p><p>Love you always, Mama</p><p> </p><p>Ilya s
sentence, reading it over and over until a sob cracked through his chest. The letters fell from his hands, from his lap to the floor as he was wracked with fo
unshed tears.</p><p>Shane was pulling him into his arms, Ilya going without any resistance as he crumpled. Shane’s voice was mumbling against his ear, his han
and into his hair. But Ilya couldn’t hear him over the sounds of his own crying.</p><p>“You’re ok, my love.” He finally heard Shane’s voice. “Never going to l
with you.”</p><p>He cried harder, clinging to Shane’s arm. “I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’m sorry.” he gasped between sobs.</p><p>“No, no, Ily. Nothing to be sorry
voice joined the muddled sounds in his head and on some level he knew it was Svetlana. “Oh Ilyusha.” </p><p>“I don’t know what it says.” Shane was saying, “I
he needs right now.”</p><p>Ilya clung to him even tighter. “Stay, stay Shane.” he gasped out.</p><p>“I’m not going anywhere, baby.” Shane said, kissing Ilya’s
class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Ilya cried until he physically couldn't cry any longer.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body
normal">It hadn't been quiet, subtle of gentle type of crying. It wasn't a cry he could deny later or cover with exhaustion. His whole body had shaken with it
that left him gasping for air between them, his fingers digging into Shane's arm hard enough to leave marks on his skin. At some point his breathing had turne
uneven hitch and Shane's murmurs about trying to slow down fell on deaf ears. </p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Breathe
try!"</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Ilya had tried, had pressed his face harder into Shane's neck and attempted to mat
his chest until the worst of the gasping eased but he was still shaking.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">His face felt s
eyes, to his cheeks, even his lips somehow, like he'd taken a stick to the face. His throat was raw from the sounds he'd made, sounds he didn't even know he c
ached in a strange, hollow way, like a muscle he hadn't known he had was finally relaxing after being clenched for years.</p><p class="font-claude-response-bo
whitespace-normal">When he came back to himself fully, he was curled on his side with his head in Shane's lap, his boyfriend's fingers carding through his hai
around his thigh, while Svetlana was sitting on the floor in front of the couch. She was holding his hand, her head laying on the edge of the couch a few inch
<p>“There you are.” Svetlana said, voice quiet. </p><p>Ilya wrapped his arm tighter around Shane. “I’ve forgotten what her voice sounds like.”</p><p>Svetlana’
her eyes bright with unshed tears. “Could you hear her when you were reading?” Ilya nodded, “She loved you so much.”</p><p>Ilya’s eyes stung with more tears.
anymore.”</p><p>“Ok. Then we won’t.”</p><p>A heavy silence fell around them, Shane’s fingers twirling through Ilya’s hair in the way that made his eyes feel h
<p>“Yes, baby?”</p><p>“More?”</p><p>“‘Course.”</p><p>One of Shane’s hands rubbed his scalp with the perfect pressure while the other found his back. His eyes
shape Shane drew against his skin until he was boneless.</p><p>Ilya didn’t know when it happened but at some point he’d fallen asleep. He only knew it happene
his head now on Shane’s lower stomach, his arm looped around Shane’s leg and Shane’s hand in his hair. Svetlana was asleep on the floor, a decorative pillow t
armchair under her head.</p><p>A pale gold light was starting to fill the living room. The sound of traffic and horns honking reached up to his ears and he re
body at the comforting sounds of a city waking up. </p><p>His head rose and fell with each of Shane’s breaths as his eyes landed on the soft yellow paper now
table. <em>Ok so we know a few things. 1. There’s no money, no secret inheritance and I can prove it. 2. She did love me, truly. 3. Rose Landry is going to wa
room.</em></p><p><em>I'll need to buy her more than a few drinks. Maybe she should be the one getting the Cayenne.</em></p>
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          <p>Little happy, little angst, little sad. But Rose and Svetlana in the same room is coming!</p>
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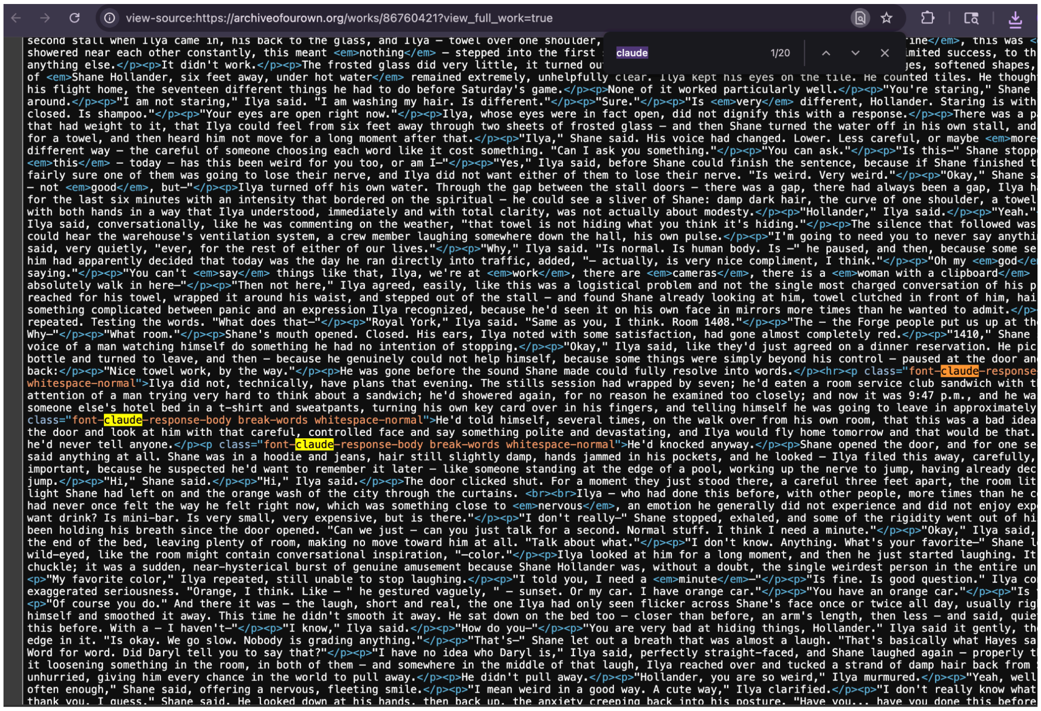
Ntchk, “Hold Your Breath”

70 kudos, 2,159 hits, 90,290 words (20 instances)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claude
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second stall when Ilya came in, his back to the glass, and Ilya – towel over one shoulder,   ine</em>, this was <
showered near each other constantly, this meant <em>nothing</em> – stepped into the first   imited success, to th
anything else.</p><p>It didn't work.</p><p>The frosted glass did very little, it turned ou   es, softened shapes,
of <em>Shane Hollander, six feet away, under hot water</em> remained extremely, unhelpfully clear. Ilya kept his eyes on the tile. He counted tiles. He though
his flight home, the seventeen different things he had to do before Saturday's game.</p><p>None of it worked particularly well.</p><p>"You're staring," Shane
around.</p><p>"I am not staring," Ilya said. "I am washing my hair. Is different."</p><p>"Sure."</p><p>"Is <em>very</em> different, Hollander. Staring is with
closed. Is shampoo."</p><p>"Your eyes are open right now."</p><p>Ilya, whose eyes were in fact open, did not dignify this with a response.</p><p>There was a p
that had weight to it, that Ilya could feel from six feet away through two sheets of frosted glass – and then Shane turned the water off in his own stall, and
for a towel, and then heard him not move for a long moment after that.</p><p>"Ilya," Shane said. His voice had changed. Lower. Less careful, or maybe <em>more
different way – the careful of someone choosing each word like it cost something. "Can I ask you something."</p><p>"You can ask."</p><p>"Is this–" Shane stopp
<em>this</em> – today – has this been weird for you too, or am I–"</p><p>"Yes," Ilya said, before Shane could finish the sentence, because if Shane finished t
fairly sure one of them was going to lose their nerve, and Ilya did not want either of them to lose their nerve. "Is weird. Very weird."</p><p>"Okay," Shane s
– not <em>good</em>, but–"</p><p>Ilya turned off his own water. Through the gap between the stall doors – there was a gap, there had always been a gap, Ilya h
for the last six minutes with an intensity that bordered on the spiritual – he could see a sliver of Shane: damp dark hair, the curve of one shoulder, a towel
with both hands in a way that Ilya understood, immediately and with total clarity, was not actually about modesty.</p><p>"Hollander," Ilya said.</p><p>"Yeah."
Ilya said, conversationally, like he was commenting on the weather, "that towel is not hiding what you think it's hiding."</p><p>The silence that followed was
could hear the warehouse's ventilation system, a crew member laughing somewhere down the hall, his own pulse.</p><p>"I'm going to need you to never say anythi
said, very quietly, "ever, for the rest of either of our lives."</p><p>"Why," Ilya said. "Is normal. Is human body. Is –" he paused, and then, because some se
him had apparently decided that today was the day he ran directly into traffic, added, "– actually, is very nice compliment, I think."</p><p>"Oh my <em>god</e
saying."</p><p>"You can't <em>say</em> things like that, Ilya, we're at <em>work</em>, there are <em>cameras</em>, there is a <em>woman with a clipboard</em>
absolutely walk in here–"</p><p>"Then not here," Ilya agreed, easily, like this was a logistical problem and not the single most charged conversation of his p
reached for his towel, wrapped it around his waist, and stepped out of the stall – and found Shane already looking at him, towel clutched in front of him, hai
something complicated between panic and an expression Ilya recognized, because he'd seen it on his own face in mirrors more times than he wanted to admit.</p>
repeated. Testing the words. "What does that–"</p><p>"Royal York," Ilya said. "Same as you, I think. Room 1408."</p><p>"The – the Forge people put us up at th
Why–"</p><p>"What room."</p><p>Shane's mouth opened. Closed. His ears, Ilya noted with some satisfaction, had gone almost completely red.</p><p>"1410," Shane
voice of a man watching himself do something he had no intention of stopping.</p><p>"Okay," Ilya said, like they'd just agreed on a dinner reservation. He pic
bottle and turned to leave, and then – because he genuinely could not help himself, because some things were simply beyond his control – paused at the door an
back:</p><p>"Nice towel work, by the way."</p><p>He was gone before the sound Shane made could fully resolve into words.</p><hr><p class="font-claude-response
whitespace-normal">Ilya did not, technically, have plans that evening. The stills session had wrapped by seven; he'd eaten a room service club sandwich with t
attention of a man trying very hard to think about a sandwich; he'd showered again, for no reason he examined too closely; and now it was 9:47 p.m., and he wa
someone else's hotel bed in a t-shirt and sweatpants, turning his own key card over in his fingers, and telling himself he was going to leave in approximately
class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">He'd told himself, several times, on the walk over from his own room, that this was a bad idea
the door and look at him with that careful, controlled face and say something polite and devastating, and Ilya would fly home tomorrow and that would be that.
he'd never tell anyone.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">He'd knocked anyway.</p><p>Shane opened the door, and for one se
said anything at all. Shane was in a hoodie and jeans, hair still slightly damp, hands jammed in his pockets, and he looked – Ilya filed this away, carefully,
important, because he suspected he'd want to remember it later – like someone standing at the edge of a pool, working up the nerve to jump, having already dec
jump.</p><p>"Hi," Shane said.</p><p>"Hi," Ilya said.</p><p>The door clicked shut. For a moment they just stood there, a careful three feet apart, the room lit
light Shane had left on and the orange wash of the city through the curtains. <br><br>Ilya – who had done this before, with other people, more times than he c
had never once felt the way he felt right now, which was something close to <em>nervous</em>, an emotion he generally did not experience and did not enjoy exp
want drink? Is mini-bar. Is very small, very expensive, but is there."</p><p>"I don't really–" Shane stopped, exhaled, and some of the rigidity went out of hi
been holding his breath since the door opened. "Can we just – can you just talk for a second. Normal stuff. I think I need a minute."</p><p>"Okay," Ilya said,
the end of the bed, leaving plenty of room, making no move toward him at all. "Talk about what."</p><p>"I don't know. Anything. What's your favorite–" Shane l
wild-eyed, like the room might contain conversational inspiration, "–color."</p><p>Ilya looked at him for a long moment, and then he just started laughing. It
chuckle; it was a sudden, near-hysterical burst of genuine amusement because Shane Hollander was, without a doubt, the single weirdest person in the entire un
<p>"My favorite color," Ilya repeated, still unable to stop laughing.</p><p>"I told you, I need a <em>minute</em>–"</p><p>"Is fine. Is good question." Ilya co
exaggerated seriousness. "Orange, I think. Like – " he gestured vaguely, " – sunset. Or my car. I have orange car."</p><p>"You have an orange car."</p><p>"Is
<p>"Of course you do." And there it was – the laugh, short and real, the one Ilya had only seen flicker across Shane's face once or twice all day, usually rig
himself and smoothed it away. This time he didn't smooth it away. He sat down on the bed too – closer than before, an arm's length, then less – and said, quie
this before. With a – I haven't–"</p><p>"I know," Ilya said.</p><p>"How do you–"</p><p>"You are very bad at hiding things, Hollander." Ilya said it gently, th
edge in it. "Is okay. We go slow. Nobody is grading anything."</p><p>"That's–" Shane let out a breath that was almost a laugh. "That's basically what Hayes sa
Word for word. Did Daryl tell you to say that?"</p><p>"I have no idea who Daryl is," Ilya said, perfectly straight-faced, and Shane laughed again – properly t
it loosening something in the room, in both of them – and somewhere in the middle of that laugh, Ilya reached over and tucked a strand of damp hair back from
unhurried, giving him every chance in the world to pull away.</p><p>He didn't pull away.</p><p>"Hollander, you are so weird," Ilya murmured.</p><p>"Yeah, well
often enough," Shane said, offering a nervous, fleeting smile.</p><p>"I mean weird in a good way. A cute way," Ilya clarified.</p><p>"I don't really know what
thank you, I guess." Shane said. He looked down at his hands, then back up, the anxiety creeping back into his posture. "Have you... have you done this before
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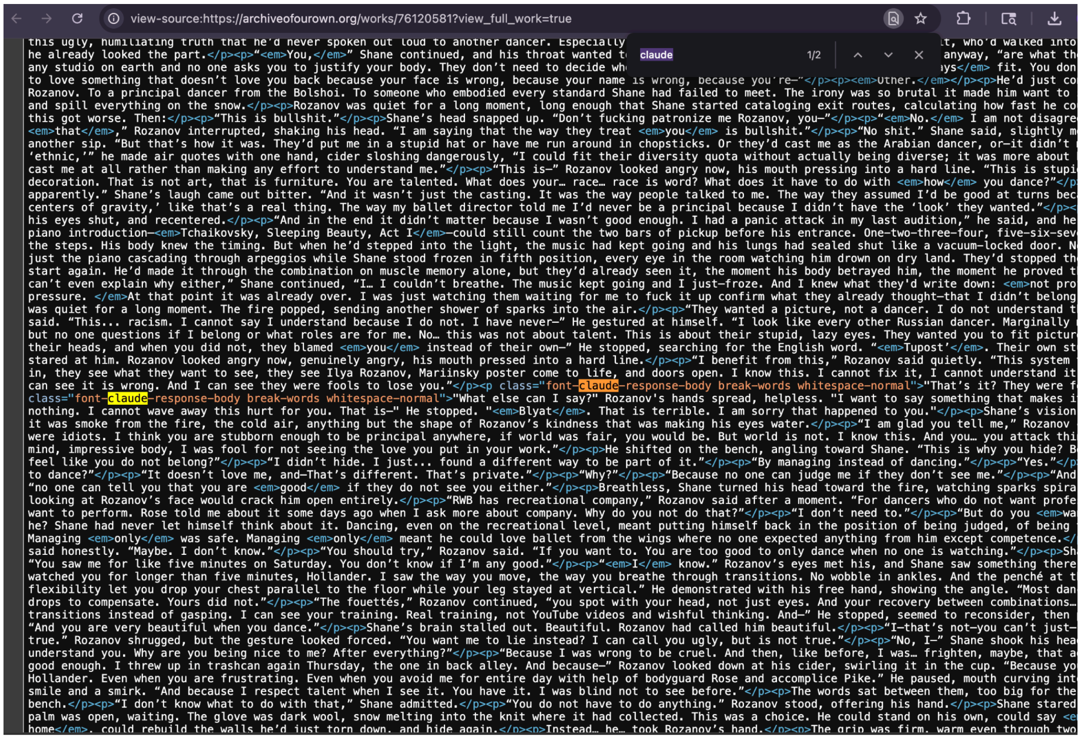
OpalApparition, “Nutcracker!”

11,368 kudos, 251,835 hits, 101,272 words (2 instances)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this ugly, humiliating truth that he’d never spoken out loud to another dancer. Especially   t, who’d walked into
he already looked the part.</p><p>“<em>You,</em>” Shane continued, and his throat wanted t   anyway, “are what th
any studio on earth and no one asks you to justify your body. They don’t need to decide wh   ys</em> fit. You don
to love something that doesn’t love you back because your face is wrong, because your name is wrong, because you’re–”</p><p><em>Other.</em></p><p>He’d just co
Rozanov. To a principal dancer from the Bolshoi. To someone who embodied every standard Shane had failed to meet. The irony was so brutal it made him want to
and spill everything on the snow.</p><p>Rozanov was quiet for a long moment, long enough that Shane started cataloging exit routes, calculating how fast he co
this got worse. Then:</p><p>“This is bullshit.”</p><p>Shane’s head snapped up. “Don’t fucking patronize me Rozanov, you–”</p><p>“<em>No.</em> I am not disagre
<em>that</em>,” Rozanov interrupted, shaking his head. “I am saying that the way they treat <em>you</em> is bullshit.”</p><p>“No shit.” Shane said, slightly m
another sip. “But that’s how it was. They’d put me in a stupid hat or have me run around in chopsticks. Or they’d cast me as the Arabian dancer, or–it didn’t
‘ethnic,’” he made air quotes with one hand, cider sloshing dangerously, “I could fit their diversity quota without actually being diverse; it was more about
cast me at all rather than making any effort to understand me.”</p><p>“This is–” Rozanov looked angry now, his mouth pressing into a hard line. “This is stupi
decoration. That is not art, that is furniture. You are talented. What does your… race… race is word? What does it have to do with <em>how</em> you dance?”</p
apparently.” Shane’s laugh came out bitter. “And it wasn’t just the casting. It was the way people talked to me. The way they assumed I’d be good at turns bec
centers of gravity,’ like that’s a real thing. The way my ballet director told me I’d never be a principal because I didn’t have the ‘look’ they wanted.”</p><
his eyes shut, and recentered.</p><p>“And in the end it didn’t matter because I wasn’t good enough. I had a panic attack in my last audition,” he said, and he
piano introduction—<em>Tchaikovsky, Sleeping Beauty, Act I</em>—could still count the two bars of pickup before his entrance. One-two-three-four, five-six-sev
the steps. His body knew the timing. But when he’d stepped into the light, the music had kept going and his lungs had sealed shut like a vacuum-locked door. N
just the piano cascading through arpeggios while Shane stood frozen in fifth position, every eye in the room watching him drown on dry land. They’d stopped th
start again. He’d made it through the combination on muscle memory alone, but they’d already seen it, the moment his body betrayed him, the moment he proved t
can’t even explain why either,” Shane continued, “I… I couldn’t breathe. The music kept going and I just–froze. And I knew what they'd write down: <em>not pro
pressure. </em>At that point it was already over. I was just watching them waiting for me to fuck it up confirm what they already thought–that I didn’t belong
was quiet for a long moment. The fire popped, sending another shower of sparks into the air.</p><p>“They wanted a picture, not a dancer. I do not understand t
said. “This... racism. I cannot say I understand because I do not. I have never–” He gestured at himself. “I look like every other Russian dancer. Marginally
but no one questions if I belong or what roles are for me. No… this was not about talent. This is about their stupid, lazy eyes. They wanted you to fit pictur
their heads, and when you did not, they blamed <em>you</em> instead of their own–” He stopped, searching for the English word. “<em>Tupost’</em>. Their own st
stared at him. Rozanov looked angry now, genuinely angry, his mouth pressed into a hard line.</p><p>“I benefit from this,” Rozanov said quietly. “This system
in, they see what they want to see, they see Ilya Rozanov, Mariinsky poster come to life, and doors open. I know this. I cannot fix it, I cannot understand it
can see it is wrong. And I can see they were fools to lose you.”</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"That’s it? They were f
class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"What else can I say?" Rozanov's hands spread, helpless. "I want to say something that makes i
nothing. I cannot wave away this hurt for you. That is–" He stopped. "<em>Blyat</em>. That is terrible. I am sorry that happened to you."</p><p>Shane’s vision
it was smoke from the fire, the cold air, anything but the shape of Rozanov’s kindness that was making his eyes water.</p><p>“I am glad you tell me,” Rozanov
were idiots. I think you are stubborn enough to be principal anywhere, if world was fair, you would be. But world is not. I know this. And you… you attack thi
mind, impressive body, I was fool for not seeing the love you put in your work.”</p><p>He shifted on the bench, angling toward Shane. “This is why you hide? B
feel like you do not belong?”</p><p>“I didn’t hide. I just... found a different way to be part of it.”</p><p>“By managing instead of dancing.”</p><p>“Yes.”</p
to dance?”</p><p>“It doesn’t love me, and–That’s different. That’s private.”</p><p>“Why?”</p><p>“Because no one can judge me if they don’t see me.”</p><p>“And
“no one can tell you that you are <em>good</em> if they do not see you either.”</p><p>Breathless, Shane turned his head toward the fire, watching sparks spira
looking at Rozanov’s face would crack him open entirely.</p><p>“RWB has recreational company,” Rozanov said after a moment. “For dancers who do not want profe
want to perform. Rose told me about it some days ago when I ask more about company. Why do you not do that?”</p><p>“I don’t need to.”</p><p>“But do you <em>wa
he? Shane had never let himself think about it. Dancing, even on the recreational level, meant putting himself back in the position of being judged, of being
Managing <em>only</em> was safe. Managing <em>only</em> meant he could love ballet from the wings where no one expected anything from him except competence.</
said honestly. “Maybe. I don’t know.”</p><p>“You should try,” Rozanov said. “If you want to. You are too good to only dance when no one is watching.”</p><p>Sh
“You saw me for like five minutes on Saturday. You don’t know if I’m any good.”</p><p>“<em>I</em> know.” Rozanov’s eyes met his, and Shane saw something there
watched you for longer than five minutes, Hollander. I saw the way you move, the way you breathe through transitions. No wobble in ankles. And the penché at t
flexibility let you drop your chest parallel to the floor while your leg stayed at vertical.” He demonstrated with his free hand, showing the angle. “Most dan
drops to compensate. Yours did not.”</p><p>“The fouettés,” Rozanov continued, “you spot with your head, not just eyes. And your recovery between combinations…
transitions instead of gasping. I can see your training. Real training, not YouTube videos and wishful thinking. And–” He stopped, seemed to reconsider, then
“And you are very beautiful when you dance.”</p><p>Shane’s brain stalled out. Beautiful. Rozanov had called him beautiful.</p><p>“I–that’s not–you can’t just–
true.” Rozanov shrugged, but the gesture looked forced. “You want me to lie instead? I can call you ugly, but is not true.”</p><p>“No, I–” Shane shook his hea
understand you. Why are you being nice to me? After everything?”</p><p>“Because I was wrong to be cruel. And then, like before, I was… frighten, maybe, that a
good enough. I threw up in trashcan again Thursday, the one in back alley. And because–” Rozanov looked down at his cider, swirling it in the cup. “Because yo
Hollander. Even when you are frustrating. Even when you avoid me for entire day with help of bodyguard Rose and accomplice Pike.” He paused, mouth curving int
smile and a smirk. “And because I respect talent when I see it. You have it. I was blind not to see before.”</p><p>The words sat between them, too big for the
bench.</p><p>“I don’t know what to do with that,” Shane admitted.</p><p>“You do not have to do anything.” Rozanov stood, offering his hand.</p><p>Shane stared
palm was open, waiting. The glove was dark wool, snow melting into the knit where it had collected. This was a choice. He could stand on his own, could say <e
home</em>, could rebuild the walls he’d just torn down, and hide again.</p><p>Instead… he… took Rozanov’s hand.</p><p>The grip was firm, warm even through two
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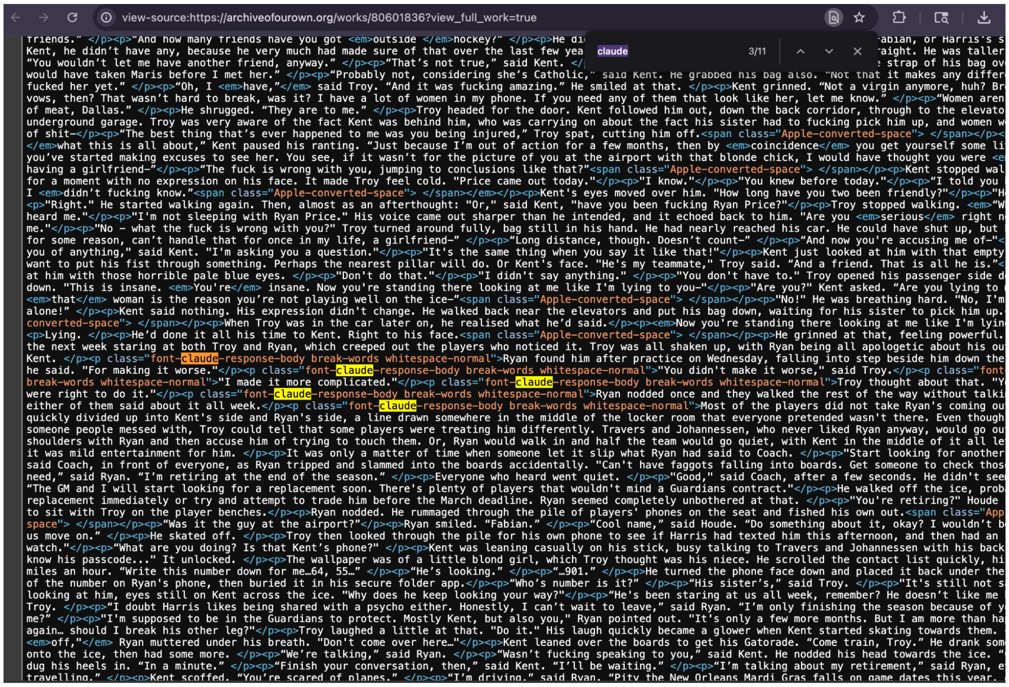
opalgod, “The Ottawa Girl”

535 kudos, 12,116 hits, 84,349 words (11 instances)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friends.” </p><p>“And how many friends have you got <em>outside </em>hockey?” </p><p>He di[illegible]abian, or Harris's s
Kent, he didn’t have any, because he very much had made sure of that over the last few yea[illegible]raight. He was taller
“You wouldn’t let me have another friend, anyway.” </p><p>“That’s not true,” said Kent. </[illegible] strap of his bag ov
would have taken Maris before I met her.” </p><p>“Probably not, considering she’s Catholic,” said Kent. He grabbed his bag also. “Not that it makes any differ
fucked her yet.” </p><p>“Oh, I <em>have,”</em> said Troy. “And it was fucking amazing.” He smiled at that. </p><p>Kent grinned. “Not a virgin anymore, huh? Br
vows, then? That wasn’t hard to break, was it? I have a lot of women in my phone. If you need any of them that look like her, let me know.” </p><p>“Women aren
of meat, Dallas.” </p><p>He shrugged. “They are to me.” </p><p>Troy headed for the door. Kent followed him out, down the back corridor, through to the elevato
underground garage. Troy was very aware of the fact Kent was behind him, who was carrying on about the fact his sister had to fucking pick him up, and women w
of shit–</p><p>“The best thing that’s ever happened to me was you being injured,” Troy spat, cutting him off.<span class="Apple-converted-space"> </span></p><
</em>what this is all about,” Kent paused his ranting. “Just because I’m out of action for a few months, then by <em>coincidence</em> you get yourself some li
you’ve started making excuses to see her. You see, if it wasn’t for the picture of you at the airport with that blonde chick, I would have thought you were <e
having a girlfriend–”</p><p>“The fuck is wrong with you, jumping to conclusions like that?”<span class="Apple-converted-space"> </span></p><p>Kent stopped wal
for a moment with no expression on his face. It made Troy feel cold. "Price came out today."</p><p>"I know."</p><p>"You knew before today."</p><p>“I told you
I <em>didn’t fucking know.”<span class="Apple-converted-space"> </span></em></p><p>Kent's eyes moved over him. "How long have you two been friendly?"</p><p>"H
<p>"Right." He started walking again. Then, almost as an afterthought: "Or," said Kent, "have you been fucking Ryan Price?"</p><p>Troy stopped walking. <em>“W
heard me."</p><p>"I'm not sleeping with Ryan Price." His voice came out sharper than he intended, and it echoed back to him. "Are you <em>serious</em> right n
me."</p><p>"No – what the fuck is wrong with you?" Troy turned around fully, bag still in his hand. He had nearly reached his car. He could have shut up, but
for some reason, can’t handle that for once in my life, a girlfriend–” </p><p>“Long distance, though. Doesn’t count–” </p><p>“And now you're accusing me of–"<
you of anything," said Kent. "I'm asking you a question."</p><p>"It's the same thing when you say it like that!"</p><p>Kent just looked at him with that empty
want to put his fist through something. Perhaps the nearest pillar will do. Or Kent's face. "He's my teammate," Troy said. “And a friend. That is all he is.”<
at him with those horrible pale blue eyes. </p><p>"Don't do that."</p><p>"I didn't say anything." </p><p>"You don't have to." Troy opened his passenger side d
down. "This is insane. <em>You're</em> insane. Now you're standing there looking at me like I'm lying to you–"</p><p>"Are you?" Kent asked. “Are you lying to
<em>that</em> woman is the reason you’re not playing well on the ice–”<span class="Apple-converted-space"> </span></p><p>"No!" He was breathing hard. "No, I'm
alone!” </p><p>Kent said nothing. His expression didn't change. He walked back near the elevators and put his bag down, waiting for his sister to pick him up.
converted-space"> </span></p><p>When Troy was in the car later on, he realised what he’d said.</p><p><em>Now you're standing there looking at me like I'm lyin
<p>Lying. </p><p>He’d done it all his time to Kent. Right to his face.<span class="Apple-converted-space"> </span></p><p>He grinned at that, feeling powerful.
the next week staring at both Troy and Ryan, which creeped out the players who noticed it. Troy was all shaken up, with Ryan being all apologetic about his ou
Kent. </p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Ryan found him after practice on Wednesday, falling into step beside him down the
he said. "For making it worse."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"You didn't make it worse," said Troy.</p><p class="font
break-words whitespace-normal">"I made it more complicated."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Troy thought about that. "Y
were right to do it."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Ryan nodded once and they walked the rest of the way without talki
either of them said about it all week.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Most of the players did not take Ryan's coming ou
quickly divided up into Kent's side and Ryan's side, a line drawn somewhere in the middle of the locker room that everyone pretended wasn't there. Even though
someone people messed with, Troy could tell that some players were treating him differently. Travers and Johannessen, who never liked Ryan anyway, would go ou
shoulders with Ryan and then accuse him of trying to touch them. Or, Ryan would walk in and half the team would go quiet, with Kent in the middle of it all le
it was mild entertainment for him. </p><p>It was only a matter of time when someone let it slip what Ryan had said to Coach. </p><p>"Start looking for another
said Coach, in front of everyone, as Ryan tripped and slammed into the boards accidentally. "Can't have faggots falling into boards. Get someone to check those
need,” said Ryan. “I’m retiring at the end of the season.” </p><p>Everyone who heard went quiet. </p><p>"Good," said Coach, after a few seconds. He didn't seem
“The GM and I will start looking for a replacement soon. There's plenty of players that wouldn't mind a Guardians contract."</p><p>He walked off the ice, prob
replacement immediately or try and attempt to trade him before the March deadline. Ryan seemed completely unbothered at that. </p><p>"You're retiring?" Houde
to sit with Troy on the player benches.</p><p>Ryan nodded. He rummaged through the pile of players' phones on the seat and fished his own out.<span class="App
space"> </span></p><p>“Was it the guy at the airport?”</p><p>Ryan smiled. “Fabian.” </p><p>“Cool name,” said Houde. “Do something about it, okay? I wouldn’t b
us move on.” </p><p>He skated off. </p><p>Troy then looked through the pile for his own phone to see if Harris had texted him this afternoon, and then had an
watch."</p><p>“What are you doing? Is that Kent’s phone?" </p><p>Kent was leaning casually on his stick, busy talking to Travers and Johannessen with his back
know his passcode..." It unlocked. </p><p>The wallpaper was of a little blond girl, which Troy thought was his niece. He scrolled the contact list quickly, hi
miles an hour. “Write this number down for me…64, 55…” </p><p>“He’s looking.” </p><p>“…901.” </p><p>He turned the phone face down and placed it back under the
of the number on Ryan's phone, then buried it in his secure folder app.</p><p>“Who’s number is it?” </p><p>“His sister’s,” said Troy. </p><p>"It's still not s
looking at him, eyes still on Kent across the ice. "Why does he keep looking your way?"</p><p>“He's been staring at us all week, remember? He doesn’t like me
Troy. </p><p>“I doubt Harris likes being shared with a psycho either. Honestly, I can’t wait to leave,” said Ryan. “I’m only finishing the season because of y
me?” </p><p>"I'm supposed to be in the Guardians to protect. Mostly Kent, but also you," Ryan pointed out. "It's only a few more months. But I am more than ha
again… should I break his other leg?"</p><p>Troy laughed a little at that. "Do it." His laugh quickly became a glower when Kent started skating towards them.
<em>off,"</em> Ryan muttered under his breath. "Don't come over here…"</p><p>Kent leaned over the boards to get his Gatorade. “Come train, Troy.” He drank som
onto the ice, then had some more. </p><p>“We’re talking,” said Ryan. </p><p>“Wasn’t fucking speaking to you,” said Kent. He nodded his head towards the ice. “
dug his heels in. “In a minute.” </p><p>“Finish your conversation, then,” said Kent. “I’ll be waiting.” </p><p>“I’m talking about my retirement,” said Ryan, e
travelling.” </p><p>Kent scoffed. “You’re scared of planes.” </p><p>“I’m driving.” said Ryan. “Pity the New Orleans Mardi Gras falls on game dates this year.
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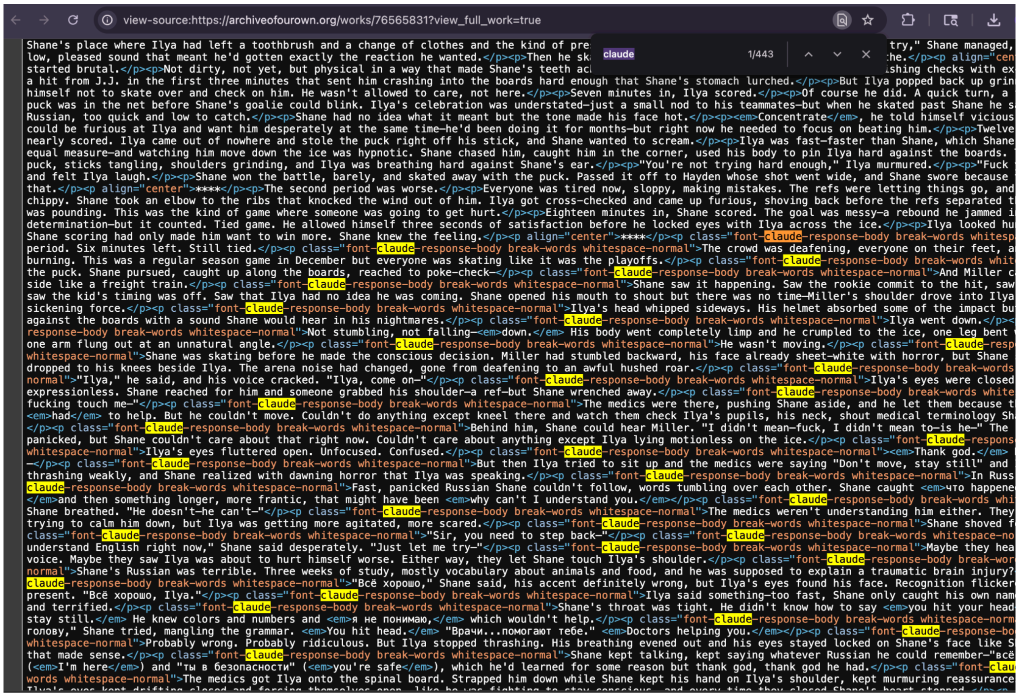
orphan_account, “Impact”

3,744 kudos, 70,846 hits, 52,842 words (443 instances)


view-source:https://archiveofourown.org/works/76565831?view_full_work=true
claude
1/443

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Shane's place where Ilya had left a toothbrush and a change of clothes and the kind of pre[illegible]try," Shane managed,
low, pleased sound that meant he'd gotten exactly the reaction he wanted.</p><p>Then he sk[illegible]the.</p><p align="cen
started brutal.</p><p>Not dirty, not yet, but physical in a way that made Shane's teeth ac[illegible]ishing checks with ex
a hit from J.J. in the first three minutes that sent him crashing into the boards hard enough that Shane's stomach lurched.</p><p>But Ilya popped back up grin
himself not to skate over and check on him. He wasn't allowed to care, not here.</p><p>Seven minutes in, Ilya scored.</p><p>Of course he did. A quick turn, a
puck was in the net before Shane's goalie could blink. Ilya's celebration was understated—just a small nod to his teammates—but when he skated past Shane he s
Russian, too quick and low to catch.</p><p>Shane had no idea what it meant but the tone made his face hot.</p><p><em>Concentrate</em>, he told himself vicious
could be furious at Ilya and want him desperately at the same time—he'd been doing it for months—but right now he needed to focus on beating him.</p><p>Twelve
nearly scored. Ilya came out of nowhere and stole the puck right off his stick, and Shane wanted to scream.</p><p>Ilya was fast—faster than Shane, which Shane
equal measure—and watching him move down the ice was hypnotic. Shane chased him, caught him in the corner, used his body to pin Ilya hard against the boards.
puck, sticks tangling, shoulders grinding, and Ilya was breathing hard against Shane's ear.</p><p>"You're not trying hard enough," Ilya murmured.</p><p>"Fuck
and felt Ilya laugh.</p><p>Shane won the battle, barely, and skated away with the puck. Passed it off to Hayden whose shot went wide, and Shane swore because
that.</p><p align="center">****</p><p>The second period was worse.</p><p>Everyone was tired now, sloppy, making mistakes. The refs were letting things go, and
chippy. Shane took an elbow to the ribs that knocked the wind out of him. Ilya got cross-checked and came up furious, shoving back before the refs separated t
was pounding. This was the kind of game where someone was going to get hurt.</p><p>Eighteen minutes in, Shane scored. The goal was messy—a rebound he jammed i
determination—but it counted. Tied game. He allowed himself three seconds of satisfaction before he locked eyes with Ilya across the ice.</p><p>Ilya looked hu
Shane scoring had only made him want to win more. Shane knew the feeling.</p><p align="center">****</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitesp
period. Six minutes left. Still tied.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">The crowd was deafening, everyone on their feet, a
burning. This was a regular season game in December but everyone was skating like it was the playoffs.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whit
the puck. Shane pursued, caught up along the boards, reached to poke-check—</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">And Miller c
side like a freight train.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane saw it happening. Saw the rookie commit to the hit, saw
saw the kid's timing was off. Saw that Ilya had no idea he was coming. Shane opened his mouth to shout but there was no time—Miller's shoulder drove into Ilya
sickening force.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Ilya's head whipped sideways. His helmet absorbed some of the impact bu
against the boards with a sound Shane would hear in his nightmares.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Ilya went down.</p><
response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Not stumbling, not falling—<em>down.</em> His body went completely limp and he crumpled to the ice, one leg bent
one arm flung out at an unnatural angle.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">He wasn't moving.</p><p class="font-claude-resp
whitespace-normal">Shane was skating before he made the conscious decision. Miller had stumbled backward, his face already sheet-white with horror, but Shane
dropped to his knees beside Ilya. The arena noise had changed, gone from deafening to an awful hushed roar.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words
normal">"Ilya," he said, and his voice cracked. "Ilya, come on—"</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Ilya's eyes were closed
expressionless. Shane reached for him and someone grabbed his shoulder—a ref—but Shane wrenched away.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words white
fucking touch me—"</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">The medics were there, pushing Shane aside, and he let them because t
<em>had</em> to help. But he couldn't move. Couldn't do anything except kneel there and watch them check Ilya's pupils, his neck, shout medical terminology Sh
</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Behind him, Shane could hear Miller. "I didn't mean—fuck, I didn't mean to—is he—" The
panicked, but Shane couldn't care about that right now. Couldn't care about anything except Ilya lying motionless on the ice.</p><p class="font-claude-respons
whitespace-normal">Ilya's eyes fluttered open. Unfocused. Confused.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal"><em>Thank god.</em>
—</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">But then Ilya tried to sit up and the medics were saying "Don't move, stay still" and
thrashing weakly, and Shane realized with dawning horror that Ilya was speaking.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">In Russ
claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Fast, panicked Russian Shane couldn't follow, words tumbling over each other. Shane caught <em>что happene
</em>and then something longer, more frantic, that might have been <em>why can't I understand you.</em></p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whi
Shane breathed. "He doesn't—he can't—"</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">The medics weren't understanding him either. They
trying to calm him down, but Ilya was getting more agitated, more scared.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane shoved f
class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Sir, you need to step back—"</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-no
understand English right now," Shane said desperately. "Just let me try—"</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Maybe they hea
voice. Maybe they saw Ilya was about to hurt himself worse. Either way, they let Shane touch Ilya's shoulder.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-wor
normal">Shane's Russian was terrible. Three weeks of study, mostly vocabulary about animals and food, and he was supposed to explain a traumatic brain injury?
claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Всё хорошо," Shane said, his accent definitely wrong, but Ilya's eyes found his face. Recognition flicker
present. "Всё хорошо, Ilya."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Ilya said something—too fast, Shane only caught his own nam
and terrified.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane's throat was tight. He didn't know how to say <em>you hit your head
stay still.</em> He knew colors and numbers and <em>я не понимаю,</em> which wouldn't help.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-norm
голову," Shane tried, mangling the grammar. <em>You hit head.</em> "Врачи...помогают тебе." <em>Doctors helping you.</em></p><p class="font-claude-response-bo
whitespace-normal">Probably wrong. Probably ridiculous. But Ilya stopped thrashing. His breathing evened out and his eyes stayed locked on Shane's face like S
that made sense.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane kept talking, kept saying whatever Russian he could remember—"всё
(<em>I'm here</em>) and "ты в безопасности" (<em>you're safe</em>), which he'd learned for some reason but thank god, thank god he had.</p><p class="font-clau
words whitespace-normal">The medics got Ilya onto the spinal board. Strapped him down while Shane kept his hand on Ilya's shoulder, kept murmuring reassurance
Ilya's eyes kept drifting closed and forcing themselves open, like he was fighting to stay conscious, and every time they closed Shane's heart stopped.</p><p
```
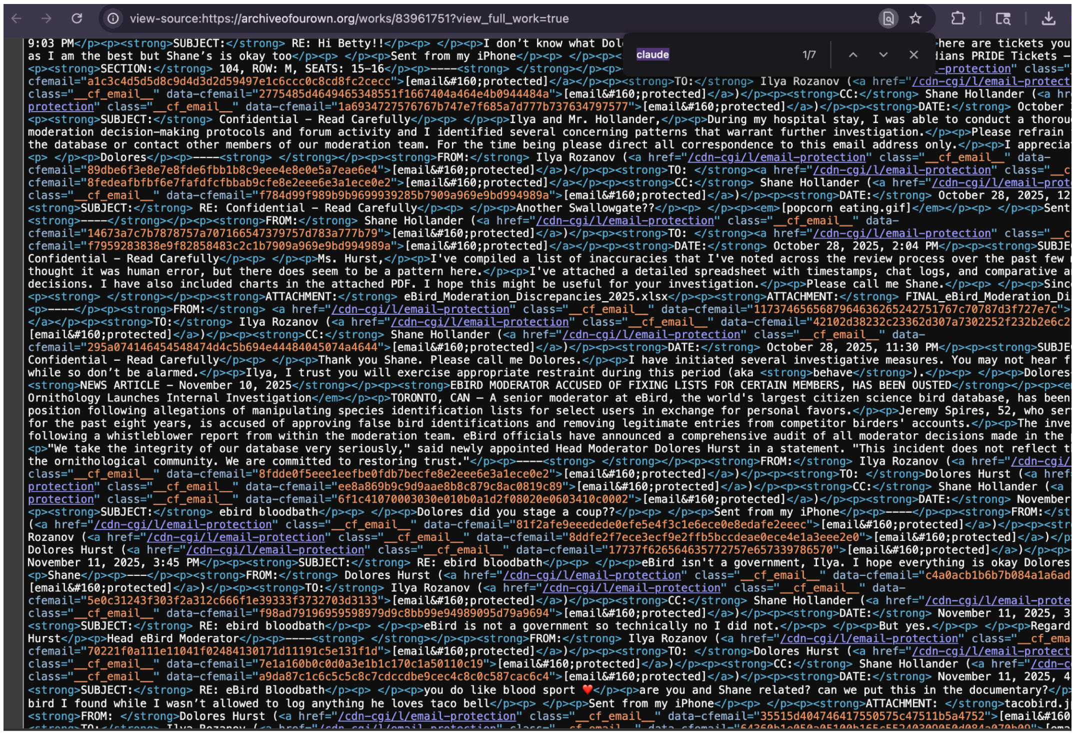

pic_in_blue, “[Birds!]”

1,500 kudos, 13,026 hits, 20,029 words (7 instances)


view-source:https://archiveofourown.org/works/83961751?view_full_work=true
claude
1/7

```
9:03 PM</p><p><strong>SUBJECT:</strong> RE: Hi Betty!!</p><p> </p><p>I don’t know what Dol                                        here are tickets you
as I am the best but Shane’s is okay too</p><p> </p><p>Sent from my iPhone</p><p> </p><p><                                  dians PRIDE Tickets –
<p><strong>SECTION:</strong> 104, ROW: M, SEATS: 15-16</p><p>----<strong> </strong></p><p>                                   -protection" class="
cfemail="a1c3c4d5d5d8c9d4d3d2d59497e1c6ccc0c8cd8fc2cecc">[email&#160;protected]</a></p><p><strong>TO:</strong> Ilya Rozanov (<a href="/cdn-cgi/l/email-protect
class="__cf_email__" data-cfemail="2775485d4649465348551f1667404a464e4b0944484a">[email&#160;protected]</a>)</p><p><strong>CC:</strong> Shane Hollander (<a hr
protection" class="__cf_email__" data-cfemail="1a6934727576767b747e7f685a7d777b737634797577">[email&#160;protected]</a>)</p><p><strong>DATE:</strong> October
<p><strong>SUBJECT:</strong> Confidential – Read Carefully</p><p> </p><p>Ilya and Mr. Hollander,</p><p>During my hospital stay, I was able to conduct a thorou
moderation decision-making protocols and forum activity and I identified several concerning patterns that warrant further investigation.</p><p>Please refrain
the database or contact other members of our moderation team. For the time being please direct all correspondence to this email address only.</p><p>I apprecia
<p> </p><p>Dolores</p><p>----<strong> </strong></p><p><strong>FROM:</strong> Ilya Rozanov (<a href="/cdn-cgi/l/email-protection" class="__cf_email__" data-
cfemail="89dbe6f3e8e7e8fde6fbb1b8c9eee4e8e0e5a7eae6e4">[email&#160;protected]</a>)</p><p><strong>TO: </strong><a href="/cdn-cgi/l/email-protection" class="__c
cfemail="8fedeafbfbf6e7fafdfcfbbab9cfe8e2eee6e3a1ece0e2">[email&#160;protected]</a></p><p><strong>CC:</strong> Shane Hollander (<a href="/cdn-cgi/l/email-prot
class="__cf_email__" data-cfemail="f784d99f989b9b9699939285b7909a969e9bd994989a">[email&#160;protected]</a>)</p><p><strong>DATE:</strong> October 28, 2025, 12
<strong>SUBJECT:</strong> RE: Confidential – Read Carefully</p><p> </p><p>Another Swallowgate??</p><p> </p><p><em>[popcorn eating.gif]</em></p><p> </p><p>Sent
<strong>----</strong></p><p><strong>FROM:</strong> Shane Hollander (<a href="/cdn-cgi/l/email-protection" class="__cf_email__" data-
cfemail="14673a7c7b7878757a707166547379757d783a777b79">[email&#160;protected]</a>)</p><p><strong>TO: </strong><a href="/cdn-cgi/l/email-protection" class="__c
cfemail="f7959283838e9f82858483c2c1b7909a969e9bd994989a">[email&#160;protected]</a></p><p><strong>DATE:</strong> October 28, 2025, 2:04 PM</p><p><strong>SUBJE
Confidential – Read Carefully</p><p> </p><p>Ms. Hurst,</p><p>I've compiled a list of inaccuracies that I've noted across the review process over the past few
thought it was human error, but there does seem to be a pattern here.</p><p>I've attached a detailed spreadsheet with timestamps, chat logs, and comparative a
decisions. I have also included charts in the attached PDF. I hope this might be useful for your investigation.</p><p>Please call me Shane.</p><p> </p><p>Sinc
<p><strong> </strong></p><p><strong>ATTACHMENT:</strong> eBird_Moderation_Discrepancies_2025.xlsx</p><p><strong>ATTACHMENT:</strong> FINAL_eBird_Moderation_Di
<p>----</p><p><strong>FROM:</strong> <a href="/cdn-cgi/l/email-protection" class="__cf_email__" data-cfemail="11737465656879646362652427517 67c70787d3f727e7c">
</a></p><p><strong>TO:</strong> Ilya Rozanov (<a href="/cdn-cgi/l/email-protection" class="__cf_email__" data-cfemail="42102d38232c23362d307a7302252f232b2e6c2
[email&#160;protected]</a>)</p><p><strong>CC:</strong> Shane Hollander (<a href="/cdn-cgi/l/email-protection" class="__cf_email__" data-
cfemail="295a074146454548474d4c5b694e44484045074a4644">[email&#160;protected]</a>)</p><p><strong>DATE:</strong> October 28, 2025, 11:30 PM</p><p><strong>SUBJE
Confidential – Read Carefully</p><p> </p><p>Thank you Shane. Please call me Dolores.</p><p>I have initiated several investigative measures. You may not hear f
while so don’t be alarmed.</p><p>Ilya, I trust you will exercise appropriate restraint during this period (aka <strong>behave</strong>).</p><p> </p><p>Dolores
<strong>NEWS ARTICLE – November 10, 2025</strong></p><p><strong>EBIRD MODERATOR ACCUSED OF FIXING LISTS FOR CERTAIN MEMBERS, HAS BEEN OUSTED</strong></p><p><e
Ornithology Launches Internal Investigation</em></p><p>TORONTO, CAN – A senior moderator at eBird, the world's largest citizen science bird database, has been
position following allegations of manipulating species identification lists for select users in exchange for personal favors.</p><p>Jeremy Spires, 52, who ser
for the past eight years, is accused of approving false bird identifications and removing legitimate entries from competitor birders' accounts.</p><p>The inve
following a whistleblower report from within the moderation team. eBird officials have announced a comprehensive audit of all moderator decisions made in the
<p>"We take the integrity of our database very seriously," said newly appointed Head Moderator Dolores Hurst in a statement. "This incident does not reflect t
the ornithological community. We are committed to restoring trust."</p><p>----<strong> </strong></p><p><strong>FROM:</strong> Ilya Rozanov (<a href="/cdn-cgi/
class="__cf_email__" data-cfemail="8fdde0f5eee1eefbe0fdb7becfe8e2eee6e3a1ece0e2">[email&#160;protected]</a>)</p><p><strong>TO: </strong>Dolores Hurst (<a href
protection" class="__cf_email__" data-cfemail="ee8a869b9c9d9aae8b8c879c8ac0819c89">[email&#160;protected]</a>)</p><p><strong>CC:</strong> Shane Hollander (<a
protection" class="__cf_email__" data-cfemail="6f1c41070003030e010b0a1d2f08020e0603410c0002">[email&#160;protected]</a>)</p><p><strong>DATE:</strong> November
<p><strong>SUBJECT:</strong> ebird bloodbath</p><p> </p><p>Dolores did you stage a coup??</p><p> </p><p>Sent from my iPhone</p><p>----</p><p><strong>FROM:</st
(<a href="/cdn-cgi/l/email-protection" class="__cf_email__" data-cfemail="81f2afe9eeedede0efe5e4f3c1e6ece0e8edafe2eeec">[email&#160;protected]</a>)</p><p><str
Rozanov (<a href="/cdn-cgi/l/email-protection" class="__cf_email__" data-cfemail="8ddfe2f7ece3ecf9e2ffb5bccdeae0ece4e1a3eee2e0">[email&#160;protected]</a>)</p
Dolores Hurst (<a href="/cdn-cgi/l/email-protection" class="__cf_email__" data-cfemail="17737f626564635772757e657339786570">[email&#160;protected]</a>)</p><p>
November 11, 2025, 3:45 PM</p><p><strong>SUBJECT:</strong> RE: ebird bloodbath</p><p> </p><p>eBird isn't a government, Ilya. I hope everything is okay Dolores
<p>Shane</p><p>---</p><p><strong>FROM:</strong> Dolores Hurst (<a href="/cdn-cgi/l/email-protection" class="__cf_email__" data-cfemail="c4a0acb1b6b7b084a1a6ad
[email&#160;protected]</a>)</p><p><strong>TO:</strong> Ilya Rozanov (<a href="/cdn-cgi/l/email-protection" class="__cf_email__" data-
cfemail="5e0c31243f303f2a312c666f1e39333f3732703d3133">[email&#160;protected]</a>)</p><p><strong>CC:</strong> Shane Hollander (<a href="/cdn-cgi/l/email-prote
class="__cf_email__" data-cfemail="f98ad79196959598979d9c8bb99e94989095d79a9694">[email&#160;protected]</a>)</p><p><strong>DATE:</strong> November 11, 2025, 3
<strong>SUBJECT:</strong> RE: ebird bloodbath</p><p> </p><p>eBird is not a government so technically no I did not.</p><p> </p><p>But yes.</p><p> </p><p>Regard
Hurst</p><p>Head eBird Moderator</p><p>----<strong> </strong></p><p><strong>FROM:</strong> Ilya Rozanov (<a href="/cdn-cgi/l/email-protection" class="__cf_ema
cfemail="70221f0a111e11041f02484130171d11191c5e131f1d">[email&#160;protected]</a>)</p><p><strong>TO: </strong>Dolores Hurst (<a href="/cdn-cgi/l/email-protect
class="__cf_email__" data-cfemail="7e1a160b0c0d0a3e1b1c170c1a50110c19">[email&#160;protected]</a>)</p><p><strong>CC:</strong> Shane Hollander (<a href="/cdn-c
class="__cf_email__" data-cfemail="a9da87c1c6c5c5c8c7cdccdbe9cec4c8c0c587cac6c4">[email&#160;protected]</a>)</p><p><strong>DATE:</strong> November 11, 2025, 4
<strong>SUBJECT:</strong> RE: eBird Bloodbath</p><p> </p><p>you do like blood sport ❤️</p><p>are you and Shane related? can we put this in the documentary?</p
bird I found while I wasn’t allowed to log anything he loves taco bell</p><p> </p><p>Sent from my iPhone</p><p> </p><p><strong>ATTACHMENT: </strong>tacobird.j
<strong>FROM: </strong>Dolores Hurst (<a href="/cdn-cgi/l/email-protection" class="__cf_email__" data-cfemail="35515d404746417550575c47511b5a4752">[email&#160
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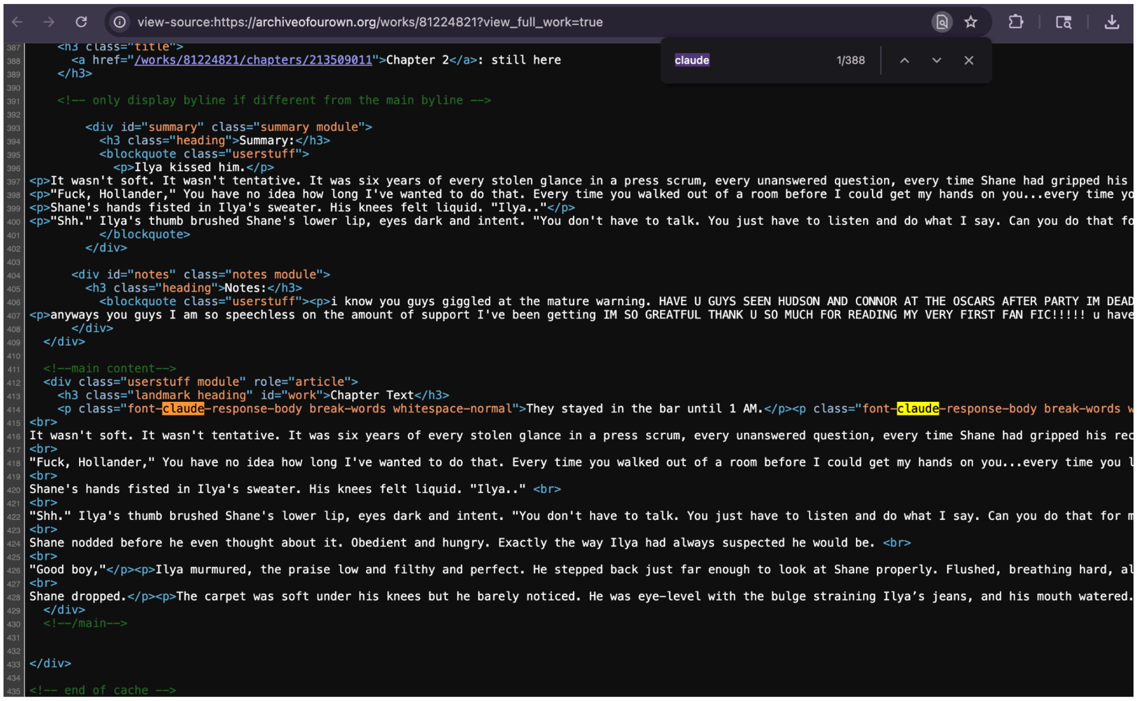
red_bull_enthusiast, “[Off The Record, On You]”

3,320 kudos, 62,432 hits, 16,485 words (388 instances)


view-source:https://archiveofourown.org/works/81224821?view_full_work=true
claude
1/388

```
    <h3 class="title">
      <a href="/works/81224821/chapters/213509011">Chapter 2</a>: still here
    </h3>

    <!-- only display byline if different from the main byline -->

        <div id="summary" class="summary module">
          <h3 class="heading">Summary:</h3>
          <blockquote class="userstuff">
            <p>Ilya kissed him.</p>
<p>It wasn't soft. It wasn't tentative. It was six years of every stolen glance in a press scrum, every unanswered question, every time Shane had gripped his
<p>"Fuck, Hollander," You have no idea how long I've wanted to do that. Every time you walked out of a room before I could get my hands on you...every time yo
<p>Shane's hands fisted in Ilya's sweater. His knees felt liquid. "Ilya.."</p>
<p>"Shh." Ilya's thumb brushed Shane's lower lip, eyes dark and intent. "You don't have to talk. You just have to listen and do what I say. Can you do that fo
          </blockquote>
        </div>

      <div id="notes" class="notes module">
        <h3 class="heading">Notes:</h3>
          <blockquote class="userstuff"><p>i know you guys giggled at the mature warning. HAVE U GUYS SEEN HUDSON AND CONNOR AT THE OSCARS AFTER PARTY IM DEAD
<p>anyways you guys I am so speechless on the amount of support I've been getting IM SO GREATFUL THANK U SO MUCH FOR READING MY VERY FIRST FAN FIC!!!!! u have
      </div>
  </div>

  <!--main content-->
  <div class="userstuff module" role="article">
    <h3 class="landmark heading" id="work">Chapter Text</h3>
    <p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">They stayed in the bar until 1 AM.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words w
<br>
It wasn't soft. It wasn't tentative. It was six years of every stolen glance in a press scrum, every unanswered question, every time Shane had gripped his rec
<br>
"Fuck, Hollander," You have no idea how long I've wanted to do that. Every time you walked out of a room before I could get my hands on you...every time you l
<br>
Shane's hands fisted in Ilya's sweater. His knees felt liquid. "Ilya.." <br>
<br>
"Shh." Ilya's thumb brushed Shane's lower lip, eyes dark and intent. "You don't have to talk. You just have to listen and do what I say. Can you do that for m
<br>
Shane nodded before he even thought about it. Obedient and hungry. Exactly the way Ilya had always suspected he would be. <br>
<br>
"Good boy,"</p><p>Ilya murmured, the praise low and filthy and perfect. He stepped back just far enough to look at Shane properly. Flushed, breathing hard, al
<br>
Shane dropped.</p><p>The carpet was soft under his knees but he barely noticed. He was eye-level with the bulge straining Ilya’s jeans, and his mouth watered.
  </div>
  <!--/main-->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<!-- end of cache -->
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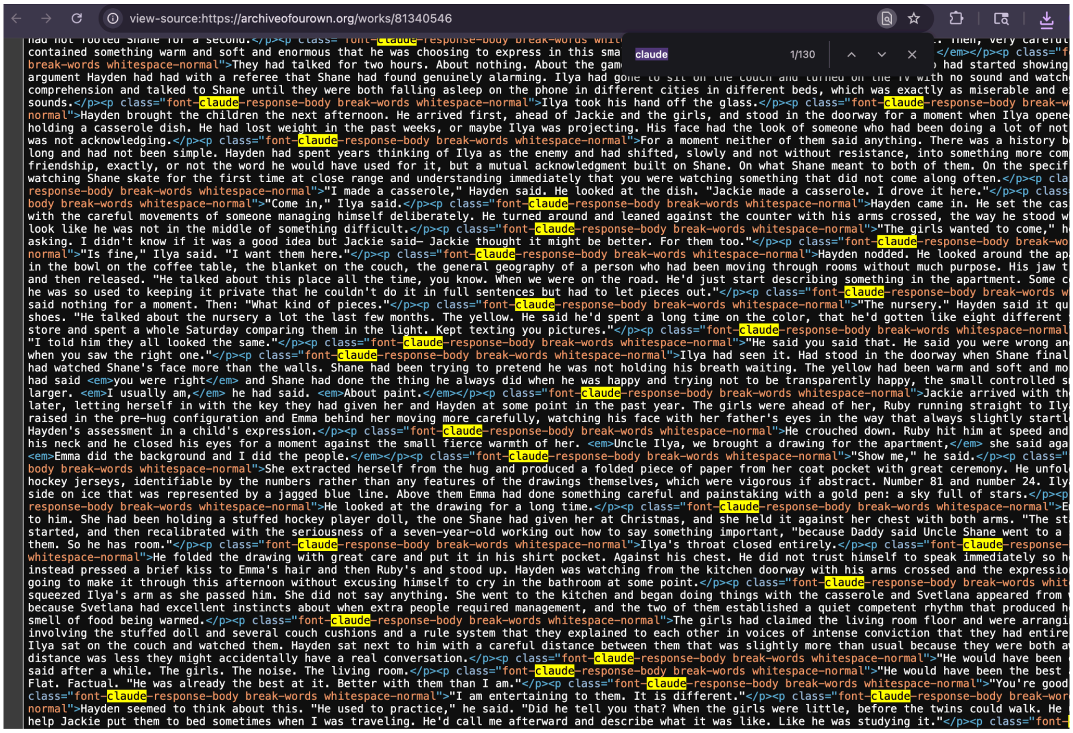
red_bull_enthusiast, [“the last puck drop”]

589 kudos, 7,150 hits, 6,325 words (130 instances)



```
had not fooled Shane for a second.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whit   . Then, very careful
contained something warm and soft and enormous that he was choosing to express in this sma   </em></p><p class="f
break-words whitespace-normal">They had talked for two hours. About nothing. About the gam   had started showing
argument Hayden had had with a referee that Shane had found genuinely alarming. Ilya had gone to sit on the couch and turned on the TV with no sound and watch
comprehension and talked to Shane until they were both falling asleep on the phone in different cities in different beds, which was exactly as miserable and e
sounds.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Ilya took his hand off the glass.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-w
normal">Hayden brought the children the next afternoon. He arrived first, ahead of Jackie and the girls, and stood in the doorway for a moment when Ilya opene
holding a casserole dish. He had lost weight in the past weeks, or maybe Ilya was projecting. His face had the look of someone who had been doing a lot of not
was not acknowledging.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">For a moment neither of them said anything. There was a history b
long and had not been simple. Hayden had spent years thinking of Ilya as the enemy and had shifted, slowly and not without resistance, into something more com
friendship, exactly, or not the word he would have used for it, but a mutual acknowledgment built on Shane. On what Shane meant to both of them. On the specif
watching Shane skate for the first time at close range and understanding immediately that you were watching something that did not come along often.</p><p cla
response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"I made a casserole," Hayden said. He looked at the dish. "Jackie made a casserole. I drove it here."</p><p class
body break-words whitespace-normal">"Come in," Ilya said.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Hayden came in. He set the cas
with the careful movements of someone managing himself deliberately. He turned around and leaned against the counter with his arms crossed, the way he stood w
look like he was not in the middle of something difficult.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"The girls wanted to come," h
asking. I didn't know if it was a good idea but Jackie said— Jackie thought it might be better. For them too."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-wo
normal">"Is fine," Ilya said. "I want them here."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Hayden nodded. He looked around the ap
in the bowl on the coffee table, the blanket on the couch, the general geography of a person who had been moving through rooms without much purpose. His jaw t
and then released. "He talked about this place all the time, you know. When we were on the road. He'd just start describing something in the apartment. Some c
he was so used to keeping it private that he couldn't do it in full sentences but had to let pieces out."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words w
said nothing for a moment. Then: "What kind of pieces."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"The nursery." Hayden said it qu
shoes. "He talked about the nursery a lot the last few months. The yellow. He said he'd spent a long time on the color, that he'd gotten like eight different
store and spent a whole Saturday comparing them in the light. Kept texting you pictures."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal
"I told him they all looked the same."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"He said you said that. He said you were wrong an
when you saw the right one."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Ilya had seen it. Had stood in the doorway when Shane final
had watched Shane's face more than the walls. Shane had been trying to pretend he was not holding his breath waiting. The yellow had been warm and soft and mo
had said <em>you were right</em> and Shane had done the thing he always did when he was happy and trying not to be transparently happy, the small controlled s
larger. <em>I usually am,</em> he had said. <em>About paint.</em></p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Jackie arrived with th
later, letting herself in with the key they had given her and Hayden at some point in the past year. The girls were ahead of her, Ruby running straight to Ily
raised in the pre-hug configuration and Emma behind her moving more carefully, watching his face with her father's eyes in the way that always slightly startl
Hayden's assessment in a child's expression.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">He crouched down. Ruby hit him at speed and
his neck and he closed his eyes for a moment against the small fierce warmth of her. <em>Uncle Ilya, we brought a drawing for the apartment,</em> she said aga
<em>Emma did the background and I did the people.</em></p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Show me," he said.</p><p class="
body break-words whitespace-normal">She extracted herself from the hug and produced a folded piece of paper from her coat pocket with great ceremony. He unfol
hockey jerseys, identifiable by the numbers rather than any features of the drawings themselves, which were vigorous if abstract. Number 81 and number 24. Ily
side on ice that was represented by a jagged blue line. Above them Emma had done something careful and painstaking with a gold pen: a sky full of stars.</p><p
response-body break-words whitespace-normal">He looked at the drawing for a long time.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">E
to him. She had been holding a stuffed hockey player doll, the one Shane had given her at Christmas, and she held it against her chest with both arms. "The st
started, and then recalibrated with the seriousness of a seven-year-old working out how to say something important, "because Daddy said Uncle Shane went to a
them. So he has room."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Ilya's throat closed entirely.</p><p class="font-claude-response-
whitespace-normal">He folded the drawing with great care and put it in his shirt pocket. Against his chest. He did not trust himself to speak immediately so h
instead pressed a brief kiss to Emma's hair and then Ruby's and stood up. Hayden was watching from the kitchen doorway with his arms crossed and the expressio
going to make it through this afternoon without excusing himself to cry in the bathroom at some point.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whit
squeezed Ilya's arm as she passed him. She did not say anything. She went to the kitchen and began doing things with the casserole and Svetlana appeared from
because Svetlana had excellent instincts about when extra people required management, and the two of them established a quiet competent rhythm that produced h
smell of food being warmed.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">The girls had claimed the living room floor and were arrangi
involving the stuffed doll and several couch cushions and a rule system that they explained to each other in voices of intense conviction that they had entire
Ilya sat on the couch and watched them. Hayden sat next to him with a careful distance between them that was slightly more than usual because they were both a
distance was less they might accidentally have a real conversation.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"He would have been
said after a while. The girls. The noise. The living room.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"He would have been the best
Flat. Factual. "He was already the best at it. Better with them than I am."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"You're good
class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"I am entertaining to them. It is different."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-wor
normal">Hayden seemed to think about this. "He used to practice," he said. "Did he tell you that? When the girls were little, before the twins could walk. He
help Jackie put them to bed sometimes when I was traveling. He'd call me afterward and describe what it was like. Like he was studying it."</p><p class="font-
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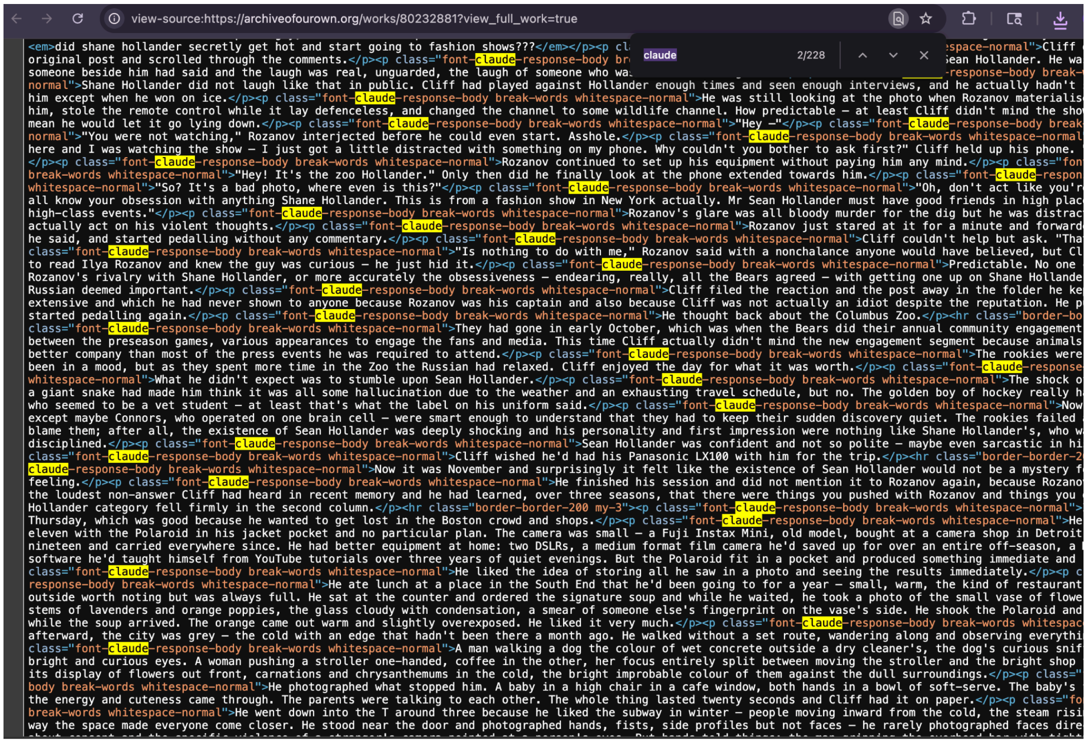
rose_alwar_31, “[I’m jealous of the morning sun that gets to see you first.]”

605 kudos, 20,456 hits, 138,690 words (228 instances)


view-source:https://archiveofourown.org/works/80232881?view_full_work=true
claude
2/228

```
<em>did shane hollander secretly get hot and start going to fashion shows???</em></p><p cl   space-normal">Cliff
original post and scrolled through the comments.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body br   Sean Hollander. He wa
someone beside him had said and the laugh was real, unguarded, the laugh of someone who wa   -response-body break-
normal">Shane Hollander did not laugh like that in public. Cliff had played against Hollander enough times and seen enough interviews, and he actually hadn't
him except when he won on ice.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">He was still looking at the photo when Rozanov materialis
him, stole the remote control while it lay defenceless, and changed the channel to some wildlife channel. How predictable – at least Cliff didn't mind the sho
mean he would let it go lying down.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Hey –"</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break
normal">"You were not watching," Rozanov interjected before he could even start. Asshole.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal
here and I was watching the show – I just got a little distracted with something on my phone. Why couldn't you bother to ask first?" Cliff held up his phone.
</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Rozanov continued to set up his equipment without paying him any mind.</p><p class="fon
break-words whitespace-normal">"Hey! It's the zoo Hollander." Only then did he finally look at the phone extended towards him.</p><p class="font-claude-respon
whitespace-normal">"So? It's a bad photo, where even is this?"</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Oh, don't act like you'r
all know your obsession with anything Shane Hollander. This is from a fashion show in New York actually. Mr Sean Hollander must have good friends in high plac
high-class events."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Rozanov's glare was all bloody murder for the dig but he was distrac
actually act on his violent thoughts.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Rozanov just stared at it for a minute and forward
he said, and started pedalling without any commentary.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Cliff couldn't help but ask. "Tha
class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Is nothing to do with me," Rozanov said with a nonchalance anyone would have believed, but Cl
to read Ilya Rozanov and knew the guy was curious – he just hid it.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Predictable. No one
Rozanov's rivalry with Shane Hollander, or more accurately the obsessiveness – endearing, really, all the Bears agreed – with getting one up on Shane Hollande
Russian deemed important.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Cliff filed the reaction and the post away in the folder he ke
extensive and which he had never shown to anyone because Rozanov was his captain and also because Cliff was not actually an idiot despite the reputation. He p
started pedalling again.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">He thought back about the Columbus Zoo.</p><hr class="border-bo
class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">They had gone in early October, which was when the Bears did their annual community engagement
between the preseason games, various appearances to engage the fans and media. This time Cliff actually didn't mind the new engagement segment because animals
better company than most of the press events he was required to attend.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">The rookies were
been in a mood, but as they spent more time in the Zoo the Russian had relaxed. Cliff enjoyed the day for what it was worth.</p><p class="font-claude-response
whitespace-normal">What he didn't expect was to stumble upon Sean Hollander.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">The shock o
a giant snake had made him think it was all some hallucination due to the weather and an exhausting travel schedule, but no. The golden boy of hockey really h
who seemed to be a vet student – at least that's what the label on his uniform said.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Now
except maybe Connors, who operated on one brain cell – were smart enough to understand that they had to keep their sudden discovery quiet. The rookies failed
blame them; after all, the existence of Sean Hollander was deeply shocking and his personality and first impression were nothing like Shane Hollander's, who w
disciplined.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Sean Hollander was confident and not so polite – maybe even sarcastic in hi
class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Cliff wished he'd had his Panasonic LX100 with him for the trip.</p><hr class="border-border-2
claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Now it was November and surprisingly it felt like the existence of Sean Hollander would not be a mystery f
feeling.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">He finished his session and did not mention it to Rozanov again, because Rozano
the loudest non-answer Cliff had heard in recent memory and he had learned, over three seasons, that there were things you pushed with Rozanov and things you
Hollander category fell firmly in the second column.</p><hr class="border-border-200 my-3"><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">
Thursday, which was good because he wanted to get lost in the Boston crowd and shops.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">He
eleven with the Polaroid in his jacket pocket and no particular plan. The camera was small – a Fuji Instax Mini, old model, bought at a camera shop in Detroit
nineteen and carried everywhere since. He had better equipment at home: two DSLRs, a medium format film camera he'd saved up for over an entire off-season, a
software he'd taught himself from YouTube tutorials over three years of quiet evenings. But the Polaroid fit in a pocket and produced something immediate and
class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">He liked the idea of storing all he saw in a photo and seeing the results immediately.</p><p c
response-body break-words whitespace-normal">He ate lunch at a place in the South End that he'd been going to for a year – small, warm, the kind of restaurant
outside worth noting but was always full. He sat at the counter and ordered the signature soup and while he waited, he took a photo of the small vase of flowe
stems of lavenders and orange poppies, the glass cloudy with condensation, a smear of someone else's fingerprint on the vase's side. He shook the Polaroid and
while the soup arrived. The orange came out warm and slightly overexposed. He liked it very much.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespac
afterward, the city was grey – the cold with an edge that hadn't been there a month ago. He walked without a set route, wandering along and observing everythi
class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">A man walking a dog the colour of wet concrete outside a dry cleaner's, the dog's curious snif
bright and curious eyes. A woman pushing a stroller one-handed, coffee in the other, her focus entirely split between moving the stroller and the bright shop
its display of flowers out front, carnations and chrysanthemums in the cold, the bright improbable colour of them against the dull surroundings.</p><p class="
body break-words whitespace-normal">He photographed what stopped him. A baby in a high chair in a cafe window, both hands in a bowl of soft-serve. The baby's
the energy and cuteness came through. The parents were talking to each other. The whole thing lasted twenty seconds and Cliff had it on paper.</p><p class="fo
break-words whitespace-normal">He went down into the T around three because he liked the subway in winter – people moving inward from the cold, the steam risi
way the space made everyone come closer. He stood near the door and photographed hands, fists, side profiles but not faces – he rarely photographed faces dire
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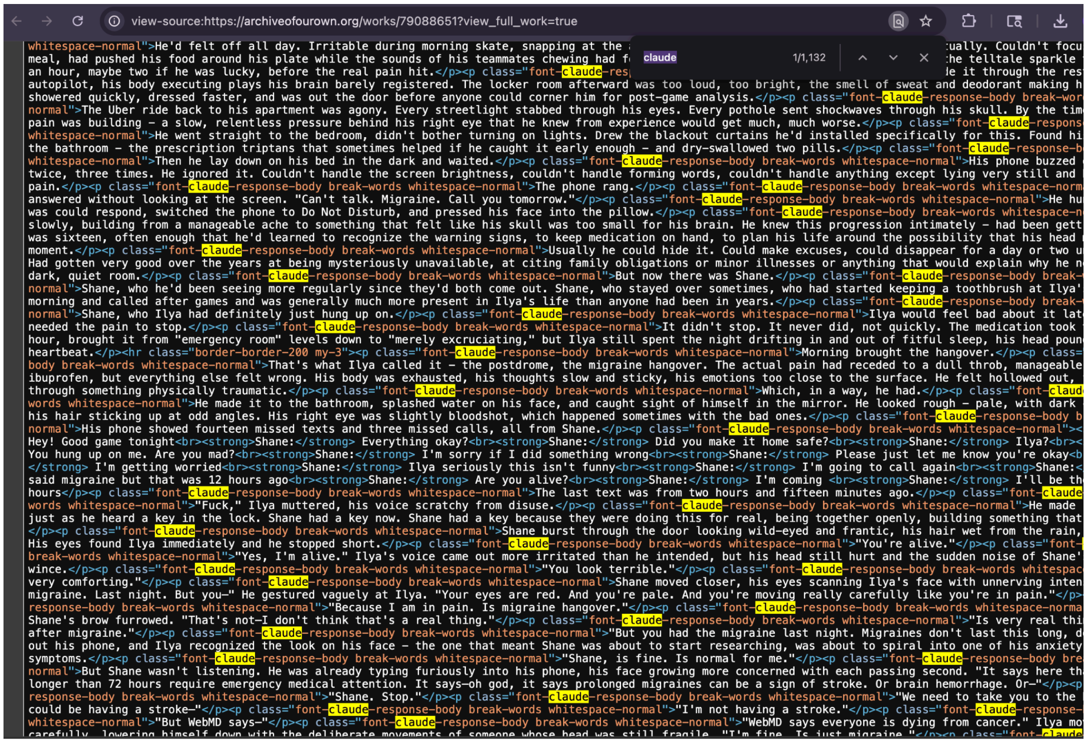
roxykris, "[the quiet things]"

1,473 kudos, 51,767 hits, 60,943 words (over 1,100 instances)


view-source:https://archiveofourown.org/works/79088651?view_full_work=true
claude
1/1,132

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whitespace-normal">He'd felt off all day. Irritable during morning skate, snapping at the            ually. Couldn't focu
meal, had pushed his food around his plate while the sounds of his teammates chewing had f           he telltale sparkle
an hour, maybe two if he was lucky, before the real pain hit.</p><p class="font-claude-res           le it through the res
autopilot, his body executing plays his brain barely registered. The locker room afterward was too loud, too bright, the smell of sweat and deodorant making h
showered quickly, dressed faster, and was out the door before anyone could corner him for post-game analysis.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-wor
normal">The Uber ride back to his apartment was agony. Every streetlight stabbed through his eyes. Every pothole sent shockwaves through his skull. By the tim
pain was building – a slow, relentless pressure behind his right eye that he knew from experience would get much, much worse.</p><p class="font-claude-respons
whitespace-normal">He went straight to the bedroom, didn't bother turning on lights. Drew the blackout curtains he'd installed specifically for this. Found hi
the bathroom – the prescription triptans that sometimes helped if he caught it early enough – and dry-swallowed two pills.</p><p class="font-claude-response-b
whitespace-normal">Then he lay down on his bed in the dark and waited.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">His phone buzzed
twice, three times. He ignored it. Couldn't handle the screen brightness, couldn't handle forming words, couldn't handle anything except lying very still and
pain.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">The phone rang.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-norm
answered without looking at the screen. "Can't talk. Migraine. Call you tomorrow."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">He hu
was could respond, switched the phone to Do Not Disturb, and pressed his face into the pillow.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-n
slowly, building from a manageable ache to something that felt like his skull was too small for his brain. He knew this progression intimately – had been gett
was sixteen, often enough that he'd learned to recognize the warning signs, to keep medication on hand, to plan his life around the possibility that his head
moment.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Usually he could hide it. Could make excuses, could disappear for a day or two u
Had gotten very good over the years at being mysteriously unavailable, at citing family obligations or minor illnesses or anything that would explain why he n
dark, quiet room.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">But now there was Shane.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-
normal">Shane, who he'd been seeing more regularly since they'd both come out. Shane, who stayed over sometimes, who had started keeping a toothbrush at Ilya'
morning and called after games and was generally much more present in Ilya's life than anyone had been in years.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-
normal">Shane, who Ilya had definitely just hung up on.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Ilya would feel bad about it lat
needed the pain to stop.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">It didn't stop. It never did, not quickly. The medication took
hour, brought it from "emergency room" levels down to "merely excruciating," but Ilya still spent the night drifting in and out of fitful sleep, his head poun
heartbeat.</p><hr class="border-border-200 my-3"><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Morning brought the hangover.</p><p class=
body break-words whitespace-normal">That's what Ilya called it – the postdrome, the migraine hangover. The actual pain had receded to a dull throb, manageable
ibuprofen, but everything else felt wrong. His body was exhausted, his thoughts slow and sticky, his emotions too close to the surface. He felt hollowed out,
through something physically traumatic.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Which, in a way, he had.</p><p class="font-claud
words whitespace-normal">He made it to the bathroom, splashed water on his face, and caught sight of himself in the mirror. He looked rough – pale, with dark
his hair sticking up at odd angles. His right eye was slightly bloodshot, which happened sometimes with the bad ones.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body b
normal">His phone showed fourteen missed texts and three missed calls, all from Shane.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal"><
Hey! Good game tonight<br><strong>Shane:</strong> Everything okay?<br><strong>Shane:</strong> Did you make it home safe?<br><strong>Shane:</strong> Ilya?<br><
You hung up on me. Are you mad?<br><strong>Shane:</strong> I'm sorry if I did something wrong<br><strong>Shane:</strong> Please just let me know you're okay<b
</strong> I'm getting worried<br><strong>Shane:</strong> Ilya seriously this isn't funny<br><strong>Shane:</strong> I'm going to call again<br><strong>Shane:<
said migraine but that was 12 hours ago<br><strong>Shane:</strong> Are you alive?<br><strong>Shane:</strong> I'm coming <br><strong>Shane:</strong> I'll be th
hours</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">The last text was from two hours and fifteen minutes ago.</p><p class="font-claude
words whitespace-normal">"Fuck," Ilya muttered, his voice scratchy from disuse.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">He made
just as he heard a key in the lock. Shane had a key now. Shane had a key because they were doing this for real, being together openly, building something that
</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane burst through the door looking wild-eyed and frantic, his hair wet from the rain,
His eyes found Ilya immediately and he stopped short.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"You're alive."</p><p class="font-
break-words whitespace-normal">"Yes, I'm alive." Ilya's voice came out more irritated than he intended, but his head still hurt and the sudden noise of Shane'
wince.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"You look terrible."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespac
very comforting."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane moved closer, his eyes scanning Ilya's face with unnerving inten
migraine. Last night. But you—" He gestured vaguely at Ilya. "Your eyes are red. And you're pale. And you're moving really carefully like you're in pain."</p>
response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Because I am in pain. Is migraine hangover."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-norma
Shane's brow furrowed. "That's not—I don't think that's a real thing."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Is very real thi
after migraine."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"But you had the migraine last night. Migraines don't last this long, d
out his phone, and Ilya recognized the look on his face – the one that meant Shane was about to start researching, was about to spiral into one of his anxiety
symptoms.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Shane, is fine. Is normal for me."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body bre
normal">But Shane wasn't listening. He was already typing furiously into his phone, his face growing more concerned with each passing second. "It says here th
longer than 72 hours require emergency medical attention. It says—oh god, it says prolonged migraines can be a sign of stroke. Or brain hemorrhage. Or—"</p><p
response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Shane. Stop."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"We need to take you to the
could be having a stroke—"</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"I'm not having a stroke."</p><p class="font-claude-response-
whitespace-normal">"But WebMD says—"</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"WebMD says everyone is dying from cancer." Ilya mo
carefully, lowering himself down with the deliberate movements of someone whose head was still fragile. "I'm fine. Is just migraine."</p><p class="font-claude
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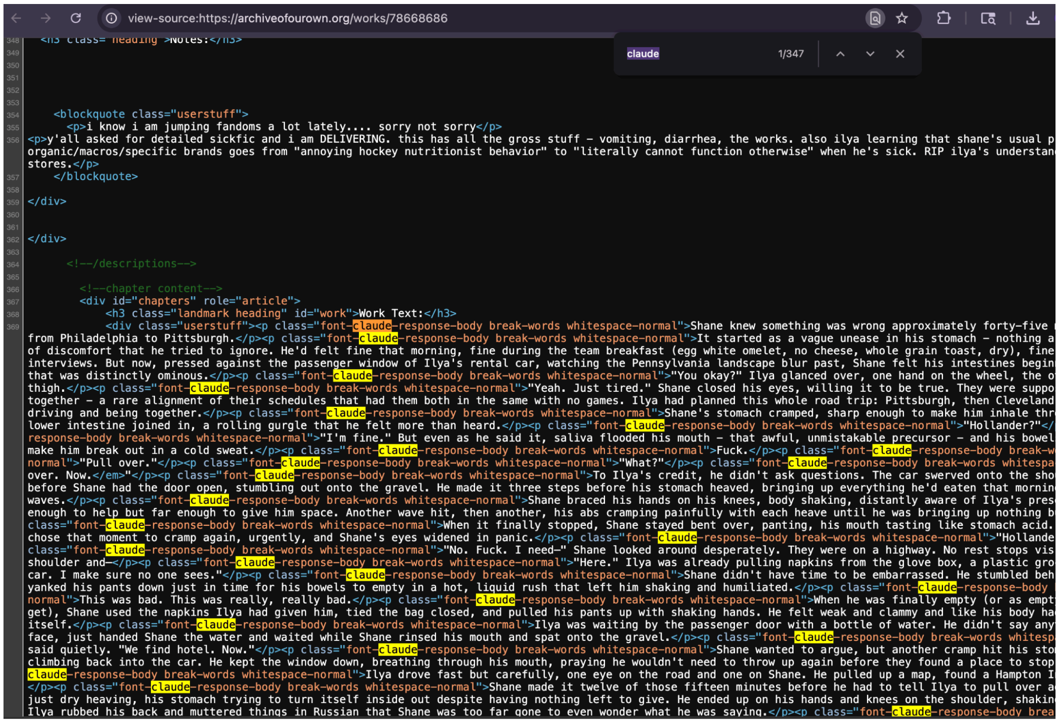
roxykris, "[the right brand of care]"

1,164 kudos, 16,352 hits, 7,077 words (347 instances)



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  <h3 class="heading">Notes:</h3>




    <blockquote class="userstuff">
      <p>i know i am jumping fandoms a lot lately.... sorry not sorry</p>
<p>y'all asked for detailed sickfic and i am DELIVERING. this has all the gross stuff – vomiting, diarrhea, the works. also ilya learning that shane's usual p
organic/macros/specific brands goes from "annoying hockey nutritionist behavior" to "literally cannot function otherwise" when he's sick. RIP ilya's understan
stores.</p>
    </blockquote>

</div>


</div>

      <!--/descriptions-->

        <!--chapter content-->
        <div id="chapters" role="article">
            <h3 class="landmark heading" id="work">Work Text:</h3>
            <div class="userstuff"><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane knew something was wrong approximately forty-five
from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">It started as a vague unease in his stomach – nothing a
of discomfort that he tried to ignore. He'd felt fine that morning, fine during the team breakfast (egg white omelet, no cheese, whole grain toast, dry), fine
interviews. But now, pressed against the passenger window of Ilya's rental car, watching the Pennsylvania landscape blur past, Shane felt his intestines begin
that was distinctly ominous.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"You okay?" Ilya glanced over, one hand on the wheel, the o
thigh.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Yeah. Just tired." Shane closed his eyes, willing it to be true. They were suppo
together – a rare alignment of their schedules that had them both in the same with no games. Ilya had planned this whole road trip: Pittsburgh, then Cleveland
driving and being together.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane's stomach cramped, sharp enough to make him inhale thr
lower intestine joined in, a rolling gurgle that he felt more than heard.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Hollander?"</
response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"I'm fine." But even as he said it, saliva flooded his mouth – that awful, unmistakable precursor – and his bowel
make him break out in a cold sweat.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Fuck.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-w
normal">"Pull over."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"What?"</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespa
over. Now.</em>"</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">To Ilya's credit, he didn't ask questions. The car swerved onto the sho
before Shane had the door open, stumbling out onto the gravel. He made it three steps before his stomach heaved, bringing up everything he'd eaten that mornin
waves.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane braced his hands on his knees, body shaking, distantly aware of Ilya's pres
enough to help but far enough to give him space. Another wave hit, then another, his abs cramping painfully with each heave until he was bringing up nothing b
class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">When it finally stopped, Shane stayed bent over, panting, his mouth tasting like stomach acid.
chose that moment to cramp again, urgently, and Shane's eyes widened in panic.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Hollande
class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"No. Fuck. I need—" Shane looked around desperately. They were on a highway. No rest stops vis
shoulder and—</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Here." Ilya was already pulling napkins from the glove box, a plastic gro
car. I make sure no one sees."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane didn't have time to be embarrassed. He stumbled beh
yanked his pants down just in time for his bowels to empty in a hot, liquid rush that left him shaking and humiliated.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body
normal">This was bad. This was really, really bad.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">When he was finally empty (or as empt
get), Shane used the napkins Ilya had given him, tied the bag closed, and pulled his pants up with shaking hands. He felt weak and clammy and like his body ha
itself.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Ilya was waiting by the passenger door with a bottle of water. He didn't say any
face, just handed Shane the water and waited while Shane rinsed his mouth and spat onto the gravel.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitesp
said quietly. "We find hotel. Now."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane wanted to argue, but another cramp hit his sto
climbing back into the car. He kept the window down, breathing through his mouth, praying he wouldn't need to throw up again before they found a place to stop
claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Ilya drove fast but carefully, one eye on the road and one on Shane. He pulled up a map, found a Hampton I
</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane made it twelve of those fifteen minutes before he had to tell Ilya to pull over a
just dry heaving, his stomach trying to turn itself inside out despite having nothing left to give. He ended up on his hands and knees on the shoulder, shakin
Ilya rubbed his back and muttered things in Russian that Shane was too far gone to even wonder what he was saying.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body brea
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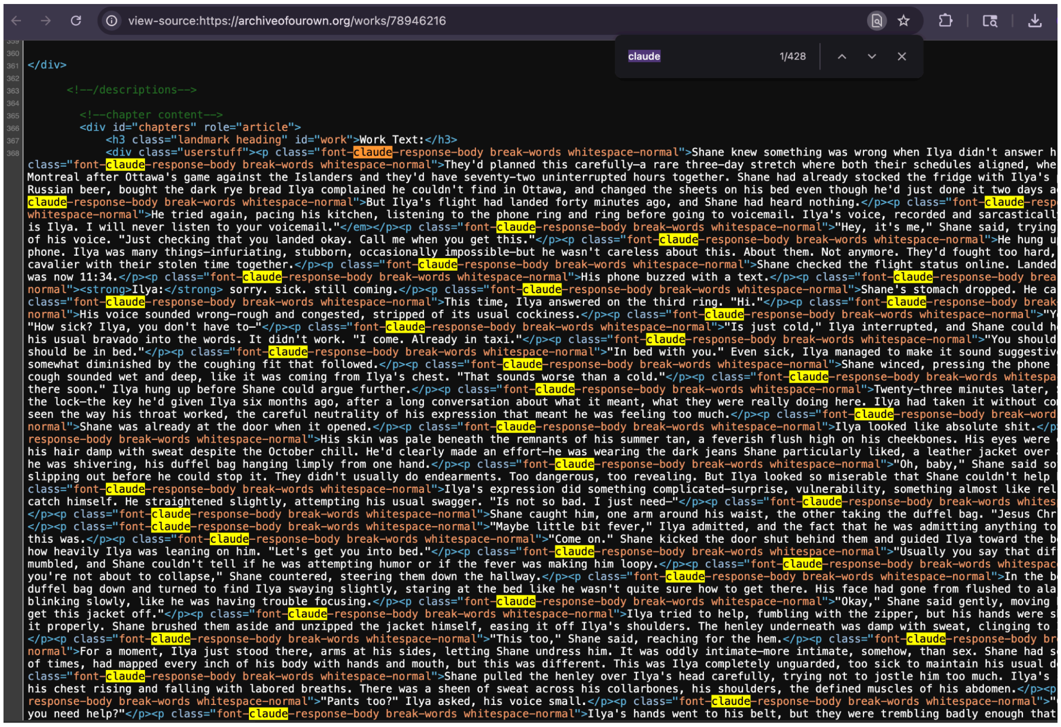
roxykris, “when the walls come down”

3,359 kudos, 45,685 hits, 7,991 words (428 instances)



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        <!--chapter content-->
        <div id="chapters" role="article">
            <h3 class="landmark heading" id="work">Work Text:</h3>
            <div class="userstuff"><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane knew something was wrong when Ilya didn't answer h
class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">They'd planned this carefully—a rare three-day stretch where both their schedules aligned, whe
Montreal after Ottawa's game against the Islanders and they'd have seventy-two uninterrupted hours together. Shane had already stocked the fridge with Ilya's 
Russian beer, bought the dark rye bread Ilya complained he couldn't find in Ottawa, and changed the sheets on his bed even though he'd just done it two days a
claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">But Ilya's flight had landed forty minutes ago, and Shane had heard nothing.</p><p class="font-claude-resp
whitespace-normal">He tried again, pacing his kitchen, listening to the phone ring and ring before going to voicemail. Ilya's voice, recorded and sarcasticall
is Ilya. I will never listen to your voicemail."</em></p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Hey, it's me," Shane said, trying
of his voice. "Just checking that you landed okay. Call me when you get this."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">He hung u
phone. Ilya was many things—infuriating, stubborn, occasionally impossible—but he wasn't careless about this. About them. Not anymore. They'd fought too hard,
cavalier with their stolen time together.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane checked the flight status online. Landed
was now 11:34.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">His phone buzzed with a text.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body brea
normal"><strong>Ilya:</strong> sorry. sick. still coming.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane's stomach dropped. He ca
class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">This time, Ilya answered on the third ring. "Hi."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break
normal">His voice sounded wrong—rough and congested, stripped of its usual cockiness.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Y
"How sick? Ilya, you don't have to—"</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Is just cold," Ilya interrupted, and Shane could h
his usual bravado into the words. It didn't work. "I come. Already in taxi."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"You should
should be in bed."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"In bed with you." Even sick, Ilya managed to make it sound suggestiv
somewhat diminished by the coughing fit that followed.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane winced, pressing the phone 
cough sounded wet and deep, like it was coming from Ilya's chest. "That sounds worse than a cold."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespa
there soon." Ilya hung up before Shane could argue further.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Twenty-three minutes later, 
the lock—the key he'd given Ilya six months ago, after a long conversation about what it meant, what they were really doing here. Ilya had taken it without co
seen the way his throat worked, the careful neutrality of his expression that meant he was feeling too much.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-word
normal">Shane was already at the door when it opened.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Ilya looked like absolute shit.</p
response-body break-words whitespace-normal">His skin was pale beneath the remnants of his summer tan, a feverish flush high on his cheekbones. His eyes were 
his hair damp with sweat despite the October chill. He'd clearly made an effort—he was wearing the dark jeans Shane particularly liked, a leather jacket over 
he was shivering, his duffel bag hanging limply from one hand.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Oh, baby," Shane said so
slipping out before he could stop it. They didn't usually do endearments. Too dangerous, too revealing. But Ilya looked so miserable that Shane couldn't help 
class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Ilya's expression did something complicated—surprise, vulnerability, something almost like rel
catch himself. He straightened slightly, attempting his usual swagger. "Is not so bad. I just need—"</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whites
</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane caught him, one arm around his waist, the other taking the duffel bag. "Jesus Chr
</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Maybe little bit fever," Ilya admitted, and the fact that he was admitting anything to
this was.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Come on." Shane kicked the door shut behind them and guided Ilya toward the b
how heavily Ilya was leaning on him. "Let's get you into bed."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Usually you say that dif
mumbled, and Shane couldn't tell if he was attempting humor or if the fever was making him loopy.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespac
you're not about to collapse," Shane countered, steering them down the hallway.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">In the b
duffel bag down and turned to find Ilya swaying slightly, staring at the bed like he wasn't quite sure how to get there. His face had gone from flushed to ala
blinking slowly, like he was having trouble focusing.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Okay," Shane said gently, moving 
get this jacket off."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Ilya tried to help, fumbling with the zipper, but his hands were s
it properly. Shane brushed them aside and unzipped the jacket himself, easing it off Ilya's shoulders. The henley underneath was damp with sweat, clinging to 
</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"This too," Shane said, reaching for the hem.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body br
normal">For a moment, Ilya just stood there, arms at his sides, letting Shane undress him. It was oddly intimate—more intimate, somehow, than sex. Shane had s
of times, had mapped every inch of his body with hands and mouth, but this was different. This was Ilya completely unguarded, too sick to maintain his usual d
class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane pulled the henley over Ilya's head carefully, trying not to jostle him too much. Ilya's 
his chest rising and falling with labored breaths. There was a sheen of sweat across his collarbones, his shoulders, the defined muscles of his abdomen.</p><p
response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Pants too?" Ilya asked, his voice small.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"
you need help?"</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Ilya's hands went to his belt, but they were trembling badly enough that
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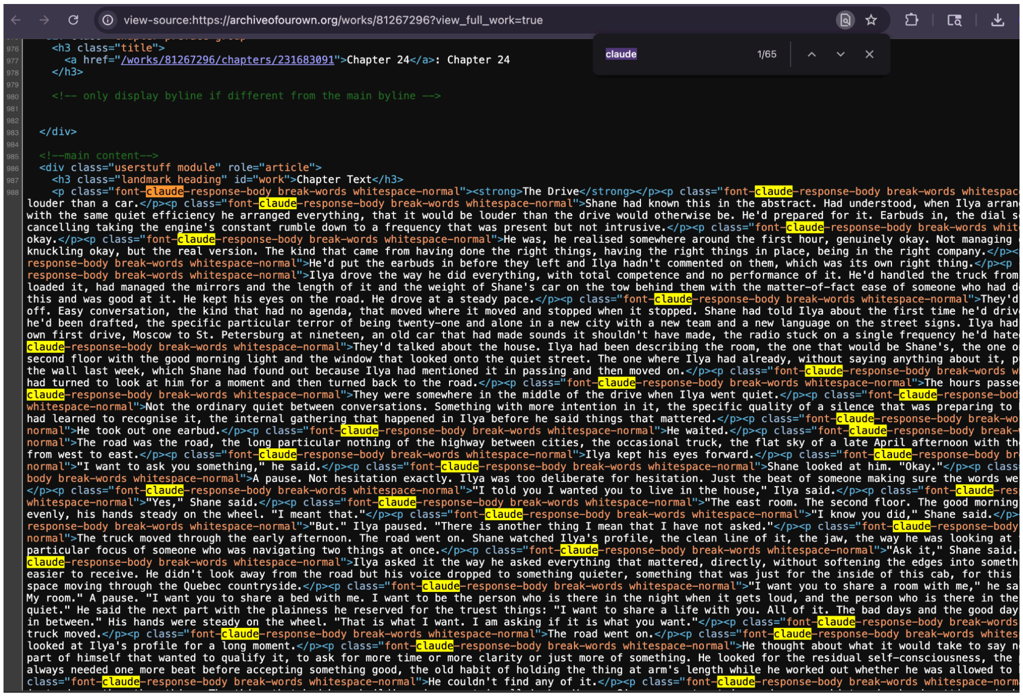
sammie4282003, “Paying Attention”

2,141 kudos, 46,330 hits, 67,077 words (65 instances)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claude
1/65

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  <div class="userstuff module" role="article">
    <h3 class="landmark heading" id="work">Chapter Text</h3>
    <p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal"><strong>The Drive</strong></p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespac
louder than a car.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane had known this in the abstract. Had understood, when Ilya arran
with the same quiet efficiency he arranged everything, that it would be louder than the drive would otherwise be. He'd prepared for it. Earbuds in, the dial s
cancelling taking the engine's constant rumble down to a frequency that was present but not intrusive.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whit
okay.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">He was, he realised somewhere around the first hour, genuinely okay. Not managing 
knuckling okay, but the real version. The kind that came from having done the right things, having the right things in place, being in the right company.</p>
response-body break-words whitespace-normal">He'd put the earbuds in before they left and Ilya hadn't commented on them, which was its own right thing.</p><p 
response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Ilya drove the way he did everything, with total competence and no performance of it. He'd handled the truck from
loaded it, had managed the mirrors and the length of it and the weight of Shane's car on the tow behind them with the matter-of-fact ease of someone who had d
this and was good at it. He kept his eyes on the road. He drove at a steady pace.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">They'd
off. Easy conversation, the kind that had no agenda, that moved where it moved and stopped when it stopped. Shane had told Ilya about the first time he'd driv
he'd been drafted, the specific particular terror of being twenty-one and alone in a new city with a new team and a new language on the street signs. Ilya had
own first drive, Moscow to St. Petersburg at nineteen, an old car that had made sounds it shouldn't have made, the radio stuck on a single frequency he'd hate
claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">They'd talked about the house. Ilya had been describing the room, the one that would be Shane's, the one o
second floor with the good morning light and the window that looked onto the quiet street. The one where Ilya had already, without saying anything about it, p
the wall last week, which Shane had found out because Ilya had mentioned it in passing and then moved on.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words w
had turned to look at him for a moment and then turned back to the road.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">The hours passe
claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">They were somewhere in the middle of the drive when Ilya went quiet.</p><p class="font-claude-response-bod
whitespace-normal">Not the ordinary quiet between conversations. Something with more intention in it, the specific quality of a silence that was preparing to 
had learned to recognise it, the internal gathering that happened in Ilya before he said things that mattered.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-wo
normal">He took out one earbud.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">He waited.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-
normal">The road was the road, the long particular nothing of the highway between cities, the occasional truck, the flat sky of a late April afternoon with th
from west to east.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Ilya kept his eyes forward.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body br
normal">"I want to ask you something," he said.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane looked at him. "Okay."</p><p class
body break-words whitespace-normal">A pause. Not hesitation exactly. Ilya was too deliberate for hesitation. Just the beat of someone making sure the words we
</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"I told you I wanted you to live in the house," Ilya said.</p><p class="font-claude-res
whitespace-normal">"Yes," Shane said.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"The east room. The second floor. The good morning
evenly, his hands steady on the wheel. "I meant that."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"I know you did," Shane said.</p>
response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"But." Ilya paused. "There is another thing I mean that I have not asked."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body
normal">The truck moved through the early afternoon. The road went on. Shane watched Ilya's profile, the clean line of it, the jaw, the way he was looking at 
particular focus of someone who was navigating two things at once.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Ask it," Shane said.
claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Ilya asked it the way he asked everything that mattered, directly, without softening the edges into someth
easier to receive. He didn't look away from the road but his voice dropped to something quieter, something that was just for the inside of this cab, for this 
space moving through the Quebec countryside.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"I want you to share a room with me," he sa
My room." A pause. "I want you to share a bed with me. I want to be the person who is there in the night when it gets loud, and the person who is there in the
quiet." He said the next part with the plainness he reserved for the truest things: "I want to share a life with you. All of it. The bad days and the good day
in between." His hands were steady on the wheel. "That is what I want. I am asking if it is what you want."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words
truck moved.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">The road went on.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whites
looked at Ilya's profile for a long moment.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">He thought about what it would take to say n
part of himself that wanted to qualify it, to ask for more time or more clarity or just more of something. He looked for the residual self-consciousness, the 
always needed one more beat before accepting something good, the old habit of holding the thing at arm's length while he worked out whether he was allowed to 
class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">He couldn't find any of it.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-norm
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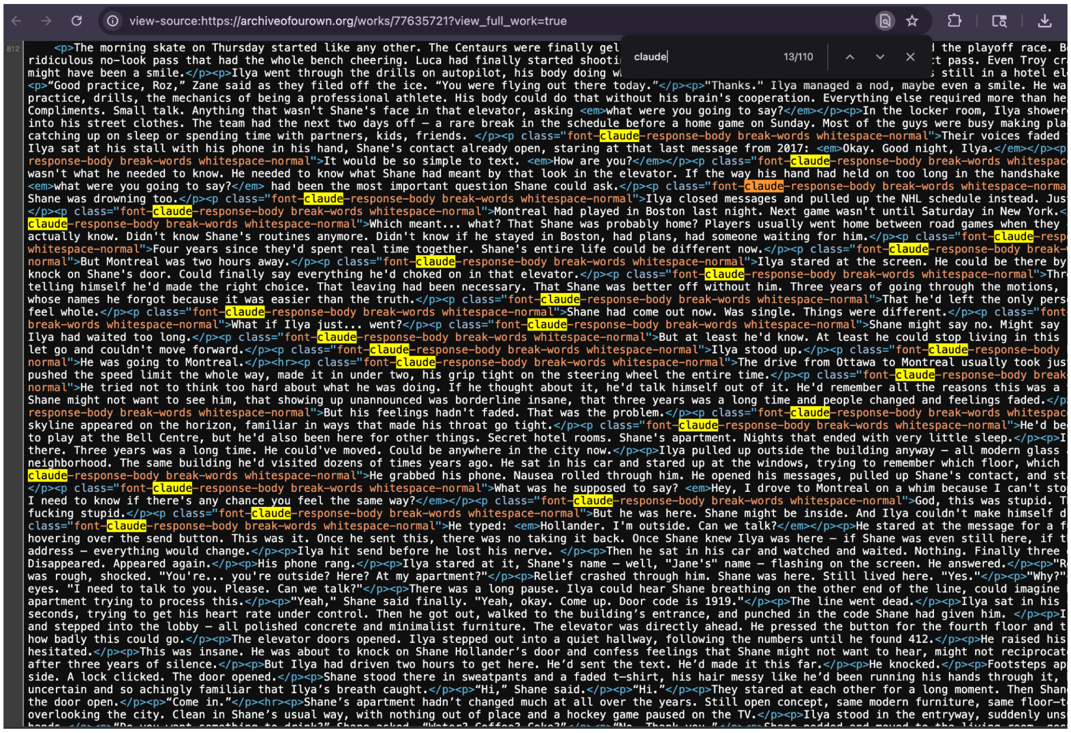
Scorp112, “What Might Have Been”

2,496 kudos, 52,171 hits, 35,465 words (110 instances)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claude
13/110

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    <p>The morning skate on Thursday started like any other. The Centaurs were finally gel                    the playoff race. B
ridiculous no-look pass that had the whole bench cheering. Luca had finally started shooti                    t pass. Even Troy cr
might have been a smile.</p><p>Ilya went through the drills on autopilot, his body doing w                   still in a hotel el
<p>“Good practice, Roz,” Zane said as they filed off the ice. “You were flying out there today.”</p><p>"Thanks." Ilya managed a nod, maybe even a smile. He wa
practice, drills, the mechanics of being a professional athlete. His body could do that without his brain's cooperation. Everything else required more than he
Compliments. Small talk. Anything that wasn't Shane's face in that elevator, asking <em>what were you going to say?</em></p><p>In the locker room, Ilya showe
into his street clothes. The team had the next two days off – a rare break in the schedule before a home game on Sunday. Most of the guys were busy making pla
catching up on sleep or spending time with partners, kids, friends. </p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Their voices faded
Ilya sat at his stall with his phone in his hand, Shane's contact already open, staring at that last message from 2017: <em>Okay. Good night, Ilya.</em></p><p
response-body break-words whitespace-normal">It would be so simple to text. <em>How are you?</em></p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespac
wasn't what he needed to know. He needed to know what Shane had meant by that look in the elevator. If the way his hand had held on too long in the handshake
<em>what were you going to say?</em> had been the most important question Shane could ask.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-norma
Shane was drowning too.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Ilya closed messages and pulled up the NHL schedule instead. Jus
</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Montreal had played in Boston last night. Next game wasn't until Saturday in New York.<
claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Which meant... what? That Shane was probably home? Players usually went home between road games when they
actually know. Didn't know Shane's routines anymore. Didn't know if he stayed in Boston, had plans, had someone waiting for him.</p><p class="font-claude-resp
whitespace-normal">Four years since they'd spent real time together. Shane's entire life could be different now.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-
normal">But Montreal was two hours away.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Ilya stared at the screen. He could be there by
knock on Shane's door. Could finally say everything he'd choked on in that elevator.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Thr
telling himself he'd made the right choice. That leaving had been necessary. That Shane was better off without him. Three years of going through the motions,
whose names he forgot because it was easier than the truth.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">That he'd left the only pers
feel whole.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane had come out now. Was single. Things were different.</p><p class="font
break-words whitespace-normal">What if Ilya just... went?</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane might say no. Might say
Ilya had waited too long.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">But at least he'd know. At least he could stop living in this
let go and couldn't move forward.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Ilya stood up.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body
normal">He was going to Montreal.</p><hr><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">The drive from Ottawa to Montreal usually took jus
pushed the speed limit the whole way, made it in under two, his grip tight on the steering wheel the entire time.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break
normal">He tried not to think too hard about what he was doing. If he thought about it, he'd talk himself out of it. He'd remember all the reasons this was a
Shane might not want to see him, that showing up unannounced was borderline insane, that three years was a long time and people changed and feelings faded.</p
response-body break-words whitespace-normal">But his feelings hadn't faded. That was the problem.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespac
skyline appeared on the horizon, familiar in ways that made his throat go tight.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">He'd be
to play at the Bell Centre, but he'd also been here for other things. Secret hotel rooms. Shane's apartment. Nights that ended with very little sleep.</p><p>I
there. Three years was a long time. He could've moved. Could be anywhere in the city now.</p><p>Ilya pulled up outside the building anyway – all modern glass
neighborhood. The same building he'd visited dozens of times years ago. He sat in his car and stared up at the windows, trying to remember which floor, which
claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">He grabbed his phone. Nausea rolled through him. He opened his messages, pulled up Shane's contact, and st
</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">What was he supposed to say? <em>Hey, I drove to Montreal on a whim because I can't sto
I need to know if there's any chance you feel the same way?</em></p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">God, this was stupid. T
fucking stupid.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">But he was here. Shane might be inside. And Ilya couldn't make himself d
class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">He typed: <em>Hollander. I'm outside. Can we talk?</em></p><p>He stared at the message for a f
hovering over the send button. This was it. Once he sent this, there was no taking it back. Once Shane knew Ilya was here – if Shane was even still here, if t
address – everything would change.</p><p>Ilya hit send before he lost his nerve. </p><p>Then he sat in his car and watched and waited. Nothing. Finally three
Disappeared. Appeared again.</p><p>His phone rang.</p><p>Ilya stared at it, Shane's name – well, "Jane's" name – flashing on the screen. He answered.</p><p>"R
was rough, shocked. "You're... you're outside? Here? At my apartment?"</p><p>Relief crashed through him. Shane was here. Still lived here. "Yes."</p><p>"Why?"
eyes. "I need to talk to you. Please. Can we talk?"</p><p>There was a long pause. Ilya could hear Shane breathing on the other end of the line, could imagine
apartment trying to process this.</p><p>"Yeah," Shane said finally. "Yeah, okay. Come up. Door code is 1919."</p><p>The line went dead.</p><p>Ilya sat in his
seconds, trying to get his heart rate under control. Then he got out, walked to the building’s entrance, and punched in the code Shane had given him. </p><p>I
and stepped into the lobby – all polished concrete and minimalist furniture. The elevator was directly ahead. He pressed the button for the fourth floor and t
how badly this could go.</p><p>The elevator doors opened. Ilya stepped out into a quiet hallway, following the numbers until he found 412.</p><p>He raised his
hesitated.</p><p>This was insane. He was about to knock on Shane Hollander’s door and confess feelings that Shane might not want to hear, might not reciprocat
after three years of silence.</p><p>But Ilya had driven two hours to get here. He’d sent the text. He’d made it this far.</p><p>He knocked.</p><p>Footsteps ap
side. A lock clicked. The door opened.</p><p>Shane stood there in sweatpants and a faded t-shirt, his hair messy like he’d been running his hands through it,
uncertain and so achingly familiar that Ilya’s breath caught.</p><p>“Hi,” Shane said.</p><p>“Hi.”</p><p>They stared at each other for a long moment. Then Shan
the door open.</p><p>“Come in.”</p><hr><p>Shane’s apartment hadn’t changed much at all over the years. Still open concept, same modern furniture, same floor-t
overlooking the city. Clean in Shane’s usual way, with nothing out of place and a hockey game paused on the TV.</p><p>Ilya stood in the entryway, suddenly uns
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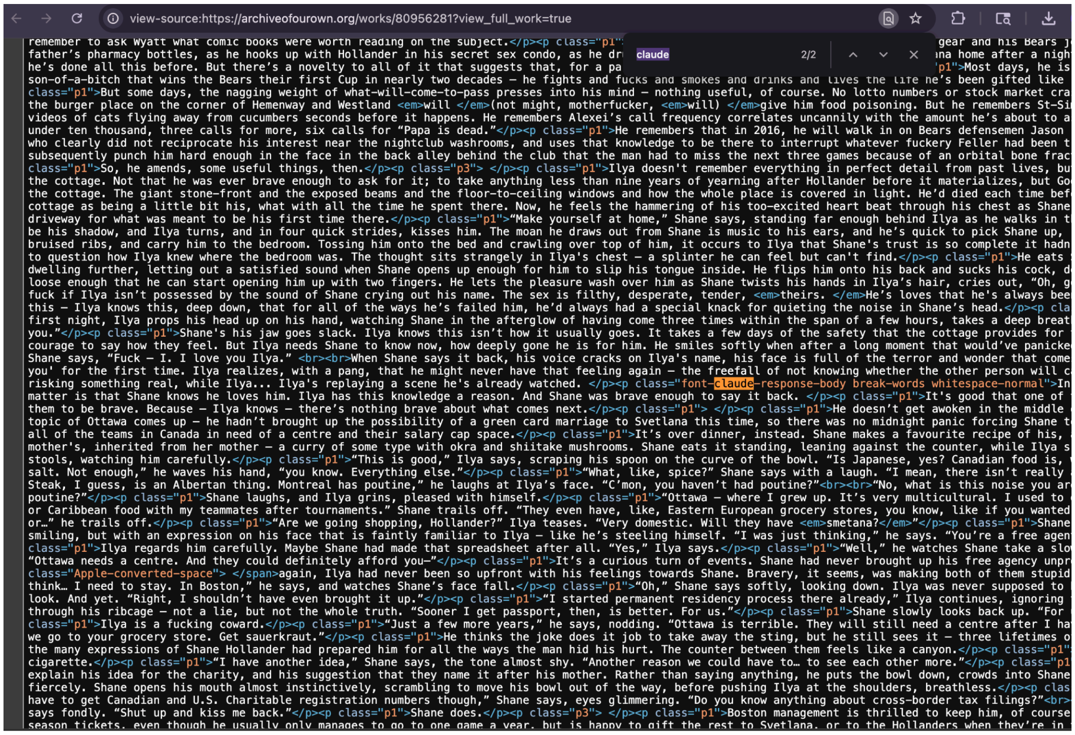
sleepingintheculdesac, “if you’re scared of wolves”

1,440 kudos, 28,994 hits, 92,100 words (2 instances)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claude
2/2

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remember to ask Wyatt what comic books were worth reading on the subject.</p><p class="p1"                   gear and his Bears j
father’s pharmacy bottles, as he hooks up with Hollander in his secret sex condo, as he dr                   ana home after a nigh
he’s done all this before. But there’s a novelty to all of it that suggests that, for a pa                   "p1">Most days, he is
son-of-a-bitch that wins the Bears their first Cup in nearly two decades – he fights and fucks and smokes and drinks and lives the life he’s been gifted like
class="p1">But some days, the nagging weight of what-will-come-to-pass presses into his mind – nothing useful, of course. No lotto numbers or stock market cra
the burger place on the corner of Hemenway and Westland <em>will </em>(not might, motherfucker, <em>will) </em>give him food poisoning. But he remembers St-Si
videos of cats flying away from cucumbers seconds before it happens. He remembers Alexei’s call frequency correlates uncannily with the amount he’s about to a
under ten thousand, three calls for more, six calls for “Papa is dead.”</p><p class="p1">He remembers that in 2016, he will walk in on Bears defensemen Jason
who clearly did not reciprocate his interest near the nightclub washrooms, and uses that knowledge to be there to interrupt whatever fuckery Feller had been t
subsequently punch him hard enough in the face in the back alley behind the club that the man had to miss the next three games because of an orbital bone frac
class="p1">So, he amends, some useful things, then.</p><p class="p3"> </p><p class="p1">Ilya doesn't remember everything in perfect detail from past lives, bu
the cottage. Not that he was ever brave enough to ask for it; to take anything less than nine years of yearning after Hollander before it materializes, but Go
the cottage. The giant stone-front and the exposed beams and the floor-to-ceiling windows and how the whole place is covered in light. He’d died each time bef
cottage as being a little bit his, what with all the time he spent there. Now, he feels the hammering of his too-excited heart beat through his chest as Shane
driveway for what was meant to be his first time there.</p><p class="p1">“Make yourself at home,” Shane says, standing far enough behind Ilya as he walks in t
be his shadow, and Ilya turns, and in four quick strides, kisses him. The moan he draws out from Shane is music to his ears, and he’s quick to pick Shane up,
bruised ribs, and carry him to the bedroom. Tossing him onto the bed and crawling over top of him, it occurs to Ilya that Shane's trust is so complete it hadn
to question how Ilya knew where the bedroom was. The thought sits strangely in Ilya's chest – a splinter he can feel but can't find.</p><p class="p1">He eats
dwelling further, letting out a satisfied sound when Shane opens up enough for him to slip his tongue inside. He flips him onto his back and sucks his cock, d
loose enough that he can start opening him up with two fingers. He lets the pleasure wash over him as Shane twists his hands in Ilya’s hair, cries out, “Oh, g
fuck if Ilya isn’t possessed by the sound of Shane crying out his name. The sex is filthy, desperate, tender, <em>theirs. </em>He’s loves that he's always bee
this – Ilya knows this, deep down, that for all of the ways he’s failed him, he’d always had a special knack for quieting the noise in Shane’s head.</p><p cla
first night, Ilya props his head up on his hand, watching Shane in the afterglow of having come three times within the span of a few hours, takes a deep breat
you.”</p><p class="p1">Shane's his jaw goes slack. Ilya knows this isn’t how it usually goes. It takes a few days of the safety that the cottage provides for
courage to say how they feel. But Ilya needs Shane to know now, how deeply gone he is for him. He smiles softly when after a long moment that would’ve panicke
Shane says, “Fuck – I. I love you Ilya.” <br><br>When Shane says it back, his voice cracks on Ilya's name, his face is full of the terror and wonder that come
you' for the first time. Ilya realizes, with a pang, that he might never have that feeling again – the freefall of not knowing whether the other person will c
risking something real, while Ilya... Ilya's replaying a scene he's already watched. </p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">In
matter is that Shane knows he loves him. Ilya has this knowledge a reason. And Shane was brave enough to say it back. </p><p class="p1">It's good that one of
them to be brave. Because – Ilya knows – there’s nothing brave about what comes next.</p><p class="p1"> </p><p class="p1">He doesn’t get awoken in the middle
topic of Ottawa comes up – he hadn’t brought up the possibility of a green card marriage to Svetlana this time, so there was no midnight panic forcing Shane t
all of the teams in Canada in need of a centre and their salary cap space.</p><p class="p1">It’s over dinner, instead. Shane makes a favourite recipe of his,
mother's, inherited from her mother – a curry of some type with okra and shiitake mushrooms. Shane eats it standing, leaning against the counter, while Ilya s
stools, watching him carefully.</p><p class="p1">“This is good,” Ilya says, scraping his spoon on the curve of the bowl. “Is Japanese, yes? Canadian food is,
salt. Not enough,” he waves his hand, “you know. Everything else.”</p><p class="p1">“What, like, spice?” Shane says with a laugh. “I mean, there isn’t really
Steak, I guess, is an Albertan thing. Montreal has poutine,” he laughs at Ilya’s face. “C’mon, you haven’t had poutine?”<br><br>“No, what is this noise you ar
poutine?”</p><p class="p1">Shane laughs, and Ilya grins, pleased with himself.</p><p class="p1">“Ottawa – where I grew up. It’s very multicultural. I used to
or Caribbean food with my teammates after tournaments.” Shane trails off. “They even have, like, Eastern European grocery stores, you know, like if you wanted
or…” he trails off.</p><p class="p1">“Are we going shopping, Hollander?” Ilya teases. “Very domestic. Will they have <em>smetana?</em>”</p><p class="p1">Shane
smiling, but with an expression on his face that is faintly familiar to Ilya – like he’s steeling himself. “I was just thinking,” he says. “You’re a free agen
class="p1">Ilya regards him carefully. Maybe Shane had made that spreadsheet after all. “Yes,” Ilya says.</p><p class="p1">“Well,” he watches Shane take a slo
“Ottawa needs a centre. And they could definitely afford you–”</p><p class="p1">It’s a curious turn of events. Shane had never brought up his free agency unpr
class="Apple-converted-space"> </span>again, Ilya had never been so upfront with his feelings towards Shane. Bravery, it seems, was making both of them stupid
think… I need to stay. In Boston,” he says, and watches Shane’s face fall.</p><p class="p1">“Oh,” Shane says softly, looking down. Ilya was never supposed to
look. And yet. “Right, I shouldn’t have even brought it up.”</p><p class="p1">“I started permanent residency process there already,” Ilya continues, ignoring
through his ribcage – not a lie, but not the whole truth. “Sooner I get passport, then, is better. For us.”</p><p class="p1">Shane slowly looks back up. “For
class="p1">Ilya is a fucking coward.</p><p class="p1">“Just a few more years,” he says, nodding. “Ottawa is terrible. They will still need a centre after I ha
we go to your grocery store. Get sauerkraut.”</p><p class="p1">He thinks the joke does it job to take away the sting, but he still sees it – three lifetimes o
the many expressions of Shane Hollander had prepared him for all the ways the man hid his hurt. The counter between them feels like a canyon.</p><p class="p1"
cigarette.</p><p class="p1">“I have another idea,” Shane says, the tone almost shy. “Another reason we could have to… to see each other more.”</p><p class="p1
explain his idea for the charity, and his suggestion that they name it after his mother. Rather than saying anything, he puts the bowl down, crowds into Shane
fiercely. Shane opens his mouth almost instinctively, scrambling to move his bowl out of the way, before pushing Ilya at the shoulders, breathless.</p><p clas
have to get Canadian and U.S. Charitable registration numbers though,” Shane says, eyes glimmering. “Do you know anything about cross-border tax filings?”<br>
says fondly. “Shut up and kiss me back.”</p><p class="p1">Shane does.</p><p class="p3"> </p><p class="p1">Boston management is thrilled to keep him, of course
season tickets, even though he usually only manages to go to one game a year, but is happy to gift the rest to Svetlana, or to the Hollanders when they’re in
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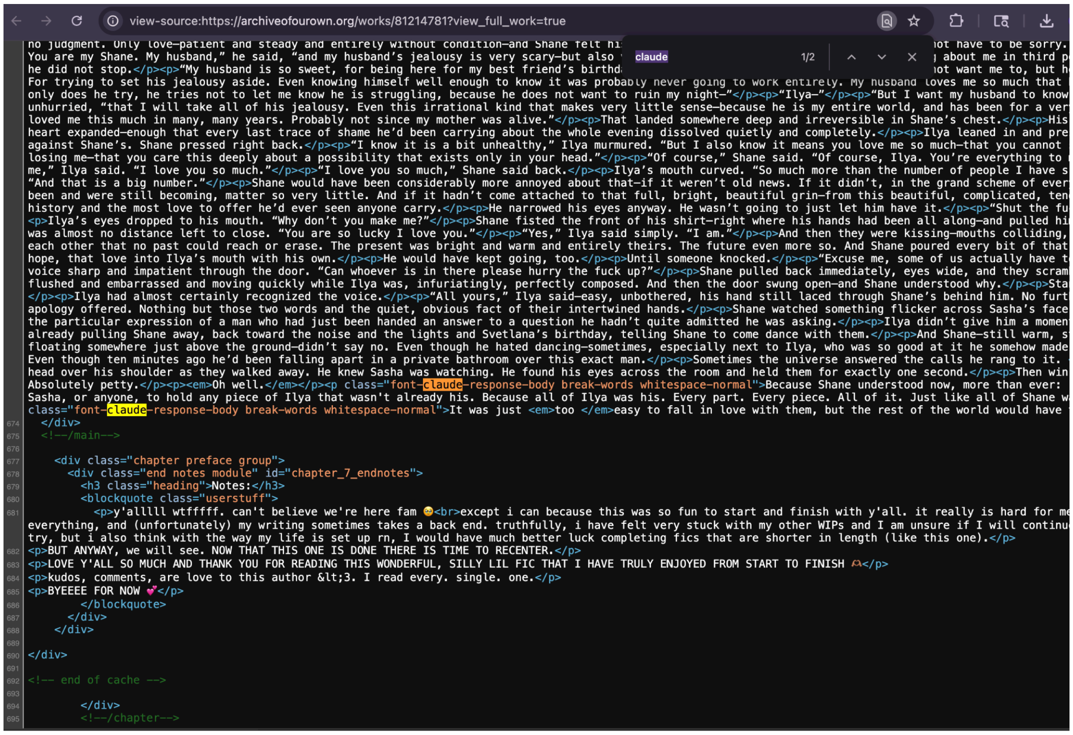
SPRINGINGintoaction (sailingtheLarryship), "It's So Easy to Fall In Love with Shane Hollander"
7,080 kudos, 149,826 hits, 48,992 words (2 instances)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claude
1/2

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no judgment. Only love—patient and steady and entirely without condition—and Shane felt hi                               not have to be sorry.
You are my Shane. My husband," he said, "and my husband's jealousy is very scary—but also                                about me in third p
he did not stop.</p><p>"My husband is so sweet, for being here for my best friend's birthd                               not want me to, but h
For trying to set his jealousy aside. Even knowing himself well enough to know it was probably never going to work entirely. My husband loves me so much that
only does he try, he tries not to let me know he is struggling, because he does not want to ruin my night—"</p><p>"Ilya—"</p><p>"But I want my husband to know
unhurried, "that I will take all of his jealousy. Even this irrational kind that makes very little sense—because he is my entire world, and has been for a ver
loved me this much in many, many years. Probably not since my mother was alive."</p><p>That landed somewhere deep and irreversible in Shane's chest.</p><p>His
heart expanded—enough that every last trace of shame he'd been carrying about the whole evening dissolved quietly and completely.</p><p>Ilya leaned in and pre
against Shane's. Shane pressed right back.</p><p>"I know it is a bit unhealthy," Ilya murmured. "But I also know it means you love me so much—that you cannot
losing me—that you care this deeply about a possibility that exists only in your head."</p><p>"Of course," Shane said. "Of course, Ilya. You're everything to
me," Ilya said. "I love you so much."</p><p>"I love you so much," Shane said back.</p><p>Ilya's mouth curved. "So much more than the number of people I have s
"And that is a big number."</p><p>Shane would have been considerably more annoyed about that—if it weren't old news. If it didn't, in the grand scheme of ever
been and were still becoming, matter so very little. And if it hadn't come attached to that full, bright, beautiful grin—from this beautiful, complicated, ten
history and the most love to offer he'd ever seen anyone carry.</p><p>He narrowed his eyes anyway. He wasn't going to just let him have it.</p><p>"Shut the fu
<p>Ilya's eyes dropped to his mouth. "Why don't you make me?"</p><p>Shane fisted the front of his shirt—right where his hands had been all along—and pulled hi
was almost no distance left to close. "You are so lucky I love you."</p><p>"Yes," Ilya said simply. "I am."</p><p>And then they were kissing—mouths colliding,
each other that no past could reach or erase. The present was bright and warm and entirely theirs. The future even more so. And Shane poured every bit of that
hope, that love into Ilya's mouth with his own.</p><p>He would have kept going, too.</p><p>Until someone knocked.</p><p>"Excuse me, some of us actually have t
voice sharp and impatient through the door. "Can whoever is in there please hurry the fuck up?"</p><p>Shane pulled back immediately, eyes wide, and they scram
flushed and embarrassed and moving quickly while Ilya was, infuriatingly, perfectly composed. And then the door swung open—and Shane understood why.</p><p>Sta
</p><p>Ilya had almost certainly recognized the voice.</p><p>"All yours," Ilya said—easy, unbothered, his hand still laced through Shane's behind him. No furt
apology offered. Nothing but those two words and the quiet, obvious fact of their intertwined hands.</p><p>Shane watched something flicker across Sasha's face
the particular expression of a man who had just been handed an answer to a question he hadn't quite admitted he was asking.</p><p>Ilya didn't give him a momen
already pulling Shane away, back toward the noise and the lights and Svetlana's birthday, telling Shane to come dance with them.</p><p>And Shane—still warm, s
floating somewhere just above the ground—didn't say no. Even though he hated dancing—sometimes, especially next to Ilya, who was so good at it he somehow made
Even though ten minutes ago he'd been falling apart in a private bathroom over this exact man.</p><p>Sometimes the universe answered the calls he rang to it.
head over his shoulder as they walked away. He knew Sasha was watching. He found his eyes across the room and held them for exactly one second.</p><p>Then win
Absolutely petty.</p><p><em>Oh well.</em></p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Because Shane understood now, more than ever:
Sasha, or anyone, to hold any piece of Ilya that wasn't already his. Because all of Ilya was his. Every part. Every piece. All of it. Just like all of Shane w
class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">It was just <em>too </em>easy to fall in love with them, but the rest of the world would have
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    <div class="chapter preface group">
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        <blockquote class="userstuff">
          <p>y'alllll wtfffff. can't believe we're here fam 🥹<br>except i can because this was so fun to start and finish with y'all. it really is hard for me
everything, and (unfortunately) my writing sometimes takes a back end. truthfully, i have felt very stuck with my other WIPs and I am unsure if I will continu
try, but i also think with the way my life is set up rn, I would have much better luck completing fics that are shorter in length (like this one).</p>
<p>BUT ANYWAY, we will see. NOW THAT THIS ONE IS DONE THERE IS TIME TO RECENTER.</p>
<p>LOVE Y'ALL SO MUCH AND THANK YOU FOR READING THIS WONDERFUL, SILLY LIL FIC THAT I HAVE TRULY ENJOYED FROM START TO FINISH 🫶</p>
<p>kudos, comments, are love to this author &lt;3. I read every. single. one.</p>
<p>BYEEEE FOR NOW 💕</p>
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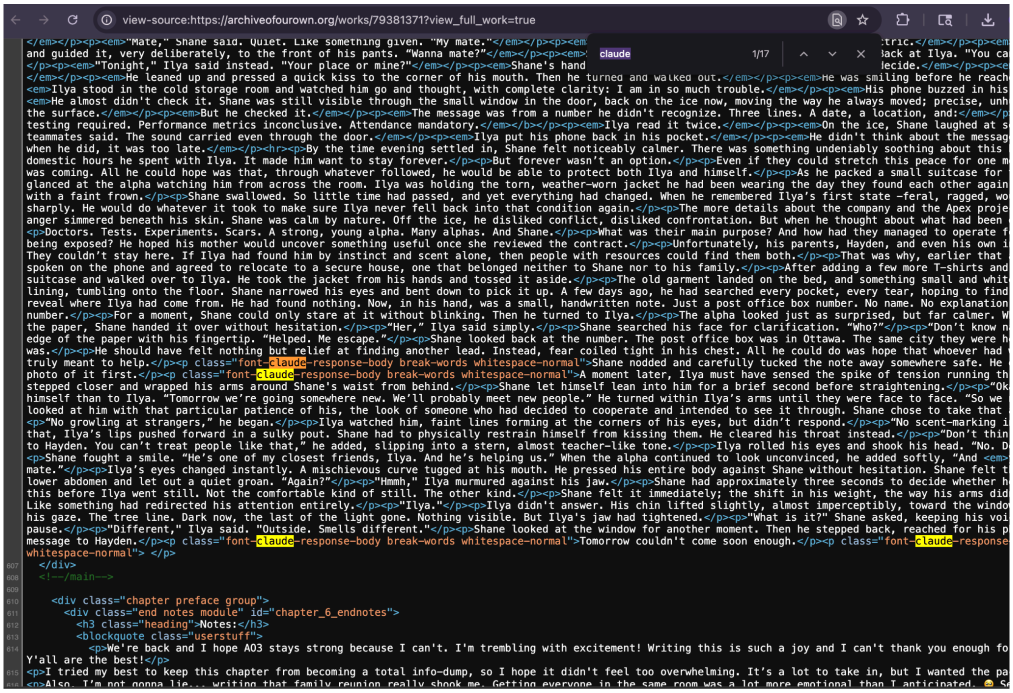
stillnotimpressed, "Scentbound"
2,145 kudos, 55,521 hits, 83,779 words (17 instances)


view-source:https://archiveofourown.org/works/79381371?view_full_work=true
claude
1/17

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</em></p><p><em>"Mate," Shane said. Quiet. Like something given. "My mate."</em></p><p><em                            tric.</em></p><p><em
and guided it, very deliberately, to the front of his pants. "Wanna mate?"</em></p><p><em>                             Back at Ilya. "You ca
</p><p><em>"Tonight," Ilya said instead. "Your place or mine?"</em></p><p><em>Shane's hand                             decide.</em></p><p><e
</em></p><p><em>He leaned up and pressed a quick kiss to the corner of his mouth. Then he turned and walked out.</em></p><p><em>He was smiling before he reache
<em>Ilya stood in the cold storage room and watched him go and thought, with complete clarity: I am in so much trouble.</em></p><p><em>His phone buzzed in his
<em>He almost didn't check it. Shane was still visible through the small window in the door, back on the ice now, moving the way he always moved; precise, unh
the surface.</em></p><p><em>But he checked it.</em></p><p><em>The message was from a number he didn't recognize. Three lines. A date, a location, and:</em></p
testing required. Performance metrics inconclusive. Attendance mandatory.</em></b></p><p><em>Ilya read it twice.</em></p><p><em>On the ice, Shane laughed at s
teammates said. The sound carried even through the door.</em></p><p><em>Ilya put his phone back in his pocket.</em></p><p><em>He didn't think about the messag
when he did, it was too late.</em></p><hr><p>By the time evening settled in, Shane felt noticeably calmer. There was something undeniably soothing about this
domestic hours he spent with Ilya. It made him want to stay forever.</p><p>But forever wasn't an option.</p><p>Even if they could stretch this peace for one m
was coming. All he could hope was that, through whatever followed, he would be able to protect both Ilya and himself.</p><p>As he packed a small suitcase for
glanced at the alpha watching him from across the room. Ilya was holding the torn, weather-worn jacket he had been wearing the day they found each other again
with a faint frown.</p><p>Shane swallowed. So little time had passed, and yet everything had changed. When he remembered Ilya's first state —feral, ragged, wo
sharply. He would do whatever it took to make sure Ilya never fell back into that condition again.</p><p>The more details about the company and the Apex proje
anger simmered beneath his skin. Shane was calm by nature. Off the ice, he disliked conflict, disliked confrontation. But when he thought about what had been
<p>Doctors. Tests. Experiments. Scars. A strong, young alpha. Many alphas. And Shane.</p><p>What was their main purpose? And how had they managed to operate f
being exposed? He hoped his mother would uncover something useful once she reviewed the contract.</p><p>Unfortunately, his parents, Hayden, and even his own i
They couldn't stay here. If Ilya had found him by instinct and scent alone, then people with resources could find them both.</p><p>That was why, earlier that
spoken on the phone and agreed to relocate to a secure house, one that belonged neither to Shane nor to his family.</p><p>After adding a few more T-shirts and
suitcase and walked over to Ilya. He took the jacket from his hands and tossed it aside.</p><p>The old garment landed on the bed, and something small and whit
lining, tumbling onto the floor. Shane narrowed his eyes and bent down to pick it up. A few days ago, he had searched every pocket, every tear, hoping to find
reveal where Ilya had come from. He had found nothing. Now, in his hand, was a small, handwritten note. Just a post office box number. No name. No explanation
number.</p><p>For a moment, Shane could only stare at it without blinking. Then he turned to Ilya.</p><p>The alpha looked just as surprised, but far calmer. W
the paper, Shane handed it over without hesitation.</p><p>"Her," Ilya said simply.</p><p>Shane searched his face for clarification. "Who?"</p><p>"Don't know n
edge of the paper with his fingertip. "Helped. Me escape."</p><p>Shane looked back at the number. The post office box was in Ottawa. The same city they were h
was.</p><p>He should have felt nothing but relief at finding another lead. Instead, fear coiled tight in his chest. All he could do was hope that whoever had
truly meant to help.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane nodded and carefully tucked the note away somewhere safe. He
photo of it first.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">A moment later, Ilya must have sensed the spike of tension running th
stepped closer and wrapped his arms around Shane's waist from behind.</p><p>Shane let himself lean into him for a brief second before straightening.</p><p>"Ok
himself than to Ilya. "Tomorrow we're going somewhere new. We'll probably meet new people." He turned within Ilya's arms until they were face to face. "So we
looked at him with that particular patience of his, the look of someone who had decided to cooperate and intended to see it through. Shane chose to take that
<p>"No growling at strangers," he began.</p><p>Ilya watched him, faint lines forming at the corners of his eyes, but didn't respond.</p><p>"No scent-marking i
that, Ilya's lips pushed forward in a sulky pout. Shane had to physically restrain himself from kissing them. He cleared his throat instead.</p><p>"Don't thin
to Hayden. You can't treat people like that," he added, slipping into a stern, almost teacher-like tone.</p><p>Ilya rolled his eyes and shook his head. "No. D
<p>Shane fought a smile. "He's one of my closest friends, Ilya. And he's helping us." When the alpha continued to look unconvinced, he added softly, "And <em>
mate."</p><p>Ilya's eyes changed instantly. A mischievous curve tugged at his mouth. He pressed his entire body against Shane without hesitation. Shane felt t
lower abdomen and let out a quiet groan. "Again?"</p><p>"Hmmh," Ilya murmured against his jaw.</p><p>Shane had approximately three seconds to decide whether h
this before Ilya went still. Not the comfortable kind of still. The other kind.</p><p>Shane felt it immediately; the shift in his weight, the way his arms did
Like something had redirected his attention entirely.</p><p>"Ilya."</p><p>Ilya didn't answer. His chin lifted slightly, almost imperceptibly, toward the windo
his gaze. The tree line. Dark now, the last of the light gone. Nothing visible. But Ilya's jaw had tightened.</p><p>"What is it?" Shane asked, keeping his voi
pause.</p><p>"Different," Ilya said. "Outside. Smells different."</p><p>Shane looked at the window for another moment. Then he stepped back, reached for his p
message to Hayden.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Tomorrow couldn't come soon enough.</p><p class="font-claude-response
whitespace-normal"> </p>
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        <blockquote class="userstuff">
          <p>We're back and I hope AO3 stays strong because I can't. I'm trembling with excitement! Writing this is such a joy and I can't thank you enough fo
Y'all are the best!</p>
<p>I tried my best to keep this chapter from becoming a total info-dump, so I hope it didn't feel too overwhelming. It's a lot to take in, but I wanted the pa
<p>Also, I'm not gonna lie... writing that family reunion really shook me. Getting everyone in the same room was a lot more emotional than I anticipated. 🥹 Se
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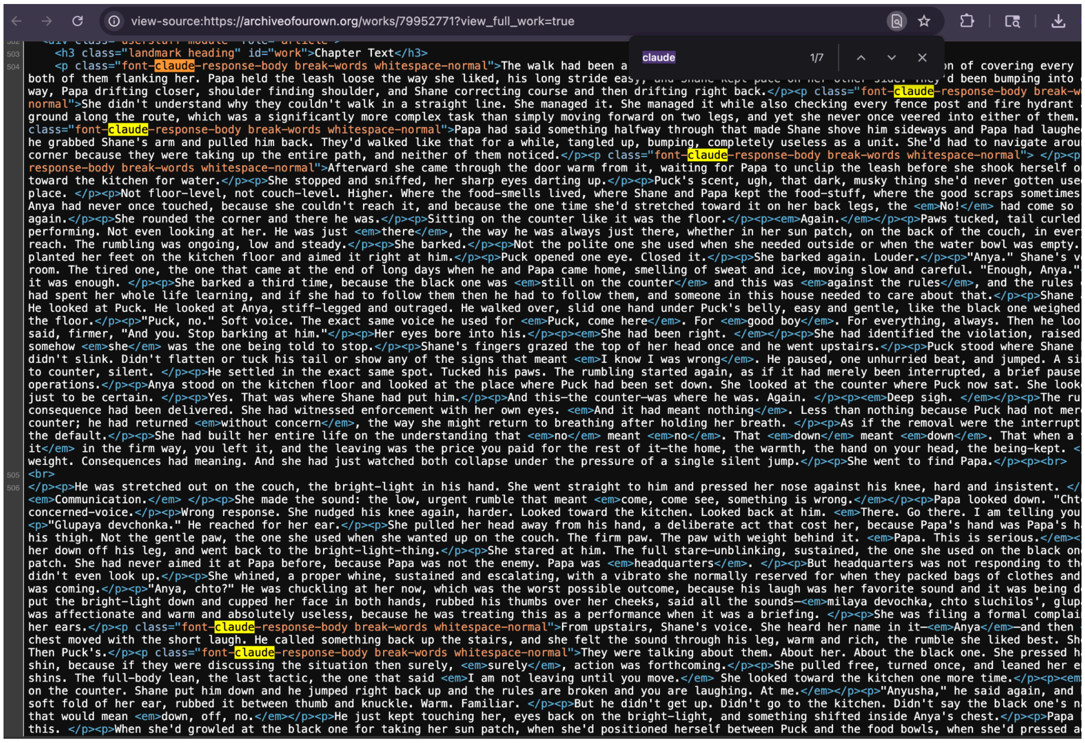
sullacat, "The Canine Defense Doctrine (In Your Arms I'd Start a War)"
1,285 kudos, 12,992 hits, 15,035 words (7 instances)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claude
1/7

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    <h3 class="landmark heading" id="work">Chapter Text</h3>
    <p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">The walk had been a                            on of covering every
both of them flanking her. Papa held the leash loose the way she liked, his long stride eas                           'd been bumping into
way, Papa drifting closer, shoulder finding shoulder, and Shane correcting course and then drifting right back.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-w
normal">She didn't understand why they couldn't walk in a straight line. She managed it. She managed it while also checking every fence post and fire hydrant
ground along the route, which was a significantly more complex task than simply moving forward on two legs, and yet she never once veered into either of them.
class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Papa had said something halfway through that made Shane shove him sideways and Papa had laughe
he grabbed Shane's arm and pulled him back. They'd walked like that for a while, tangled up, bumping, completely useless as a unit. She'd had to navigate arou
corner because they were taking up the entire path, and neither of them noticed.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal"> </p><p
response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Afterward she came through the door warm from it, waiting for Papa to unclip the leash before she shook herself o
toward the kitchen for water.</p><p>She stopped and sniffed, her sharp eyes darting up.</p><p>Puck's scent, ugh, that dark, musky thing she'd never gotten use
place. </p><p>Not floor-level, not couch-level. Higher. Where the food-smells lived, where Shane and Papa kept the food-stuff, where the good scraps sometimes
Anya had never once touched, because she couldn't reach it, and because the one time she'd stretched toward it on her back legs, the <em>No!</em> had come so
again.</p><p>She rounded the corner and there he was.</p><p>Sitting on the counter like it was the floor.</p><p><em>Again.</em></p><p>Paws tucked, tail curled
performing. Not even looking at her. He was just <em>there</em>, the way he was always just there, whether in her sun patch, on the back of the couch, in ever
reach. The rumbling was ongoing, low and steady.</p><p>She barked.</p><p>Not the polite one she used when she needed outside or when the water bowl was empty.
planted her feet on the kitchen floor and aimed it right at him.</p><p>Puck opened one eye. Closed it.</p><p>She barked again. Louder.</p><p>"Anya." Shane's v
room. The tired one, the one that came at the end of long days when he and Papa came home, smelling of sweat and ice, moving slow and careful. "Enough, Anya."
it was enough. </p><p>She barked a third time, because the black one was <em>still on the counter</em> and this was <em>against the rules</em>, and the rules
had spent her whole life learning, and if she had to follow them then he had to follow them, and someone in this house needed to care about that.</p><p>Shane
He looked at Puck. He looked at Anya, stiff-legged and outraged. He walked over, slid one hand under Puck's belly, easy and gentle, like the black one weighed
the floor.</p><p>"Puck, no." Soft voice. The exact same voice he used for <em>Puck, come here</em>. For <em>good boy</em>. For everything, always. Then he loo
said, firmer, "And you. Stop barking at him."</p><p>Her eyes bore into his.</p><p><em>She had been right. </em></p><p>She had identified the violation, raised
somehow <em>she</em> was the one being told to stop.</p><p>Shane's fingers grazed the top of her head once and he went upstairs.</p><p>Puck stood where Shane
didn't slink. Didn't flatten or tuck his tail or show any of the signs that meant <em>I know I was wrong</em>. He paused, one unhurried beat, and jumped. A si
to counter, silent. </p><p>He settled in the exact same spot. Tucked his paws. The rumbling started again, as if it had merely been interrupted, a brief pause
operations.</p><p>Anya stood on the kitchen floor and looked at the place where Puck had been set down. She looked at the counter where Puck now sat. She look
just to be certain. </p><p>Yes. That was where Shane had put him.</p><p>And this—the counter—was where he was. Again. </p><p><em>Deep sigh. </em></p><p>The ru
consequence had been delivered. She had witnessed enforcement with her own eyes. <em>And it had meant nothing</em>. Less than nothing because Puck had not mer
counter; he had returned <em>without concern</em>, the way she might return to breathing after holding her breath. </p><p>As if the removal were the interrupt
the default.</p><p>She had built her entire life on the understanding that <em>no</em> meant <em>no</em>. That <em>down</em> meant <em>down</em>. That when a
it</em> in the firm way, you left it, and the leaving was the price you paid for the rest of it—the home, the warmth, the hand on your head, the being-kept. <
weight. Consequences had meaning. And she had just watched both collapse under the pressure of a single silent jump.</p><p>She went to find Papa.</p><p><br>
<br>
</p><p>He was stretched out on the couch, the bright-light in his hand. She went straight to him and pressed her nose against his knee, hard and insistent. </
<em>Communication.</em> </p><p>She made the sound: the low, urgent rumble that meant <em>come, come see, something is wrong.</em></p><p>Papa looked down. "Cht
concerned-voice.</p><p>Wrong response. She nudged his knee again, harder. Looked toward the kitchen. Looked back at him. <em>There. Go there. I am telling you
<p>"Glupaya devchonka." He reached for her ear.</p><p>She pulled her head away from his hand, a deliberate act that cost her, because Papa's hand was Papa's h
his thigh. Not the gentle paw, the one she used when she wanted up on the couch. The firm paw. The paw with weight behind it. <em>Papa. This is serious.</em><
her down off his leg, and went back to the bright-light-thing.</p><p>She stared at him. The full stare—unblinking, sustained, the one she used on the black on
patch. She had never aimed it at Papa before, because Papa was not the enemy. Papa was <em>headquarters</em>. </p><p>But headquarters was not responding to th
didn't even look up.</p><p>She whined, a proper whine, sustained and escalating, with a vibrato she normally reserved for when they packed bags of clothes and
was coming.</p><p>"Anya, chto?" He was chuckling at her now, which was the worst possible outcome, because his laugh was her favorite sound and it was being d
put the bright-light down and cupped her face in both hands, rubbed his thumbs over her cheeks, said all the sounds—<em>milaya devochka, chto sluchilos', glup
was affectionate and warm and absolutely useless, because he was treating this as a performance when it was a briefing. </p><p>She was filing a formal complai
her ears.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">From upstairs, Shane's voice. She heard her name in it—<em>Anya</em>—and then
chest moved with the short laugh. He called something back up the stairs, and she felt the sound through his leg, warm and rich, the rumble she liked best. Sh
Then Puck's.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">They were talking about them. About her. About the black one. She pressed h
shin, because if they were discussing the situation then surely, <em>surely</em>, action was forthcoming.</p><p>She pulled free, turned once, and leaned her e
shins. The full-body lean, the last tactic, the one that said <em>I am not leaving until you move.</em> She looked toward the kitchen one more time.</p><p><em
on the counter. Shane put him down and he jumped right back up and the rules are broken and you are laughing. At me.</em></p><p>"Anyusha," he said again, and
soft fold of her ear, rubbed it between thumb and knuckle. Warm. Familiar. </p><p>But he didn't get up. Didn't go to the kitchen. Didn't say the black one's n
that would mean <em>down, off, no.</em></p><p>He just kept touching her, eyes back on the bright-light, and something shifted inside Anya's chest.</p><p>Papa
this. </p><p>When she'd growled at the black one for taking her sun patch, when she'd positioned herself between Puck and the food bowls, when she'd pressed a
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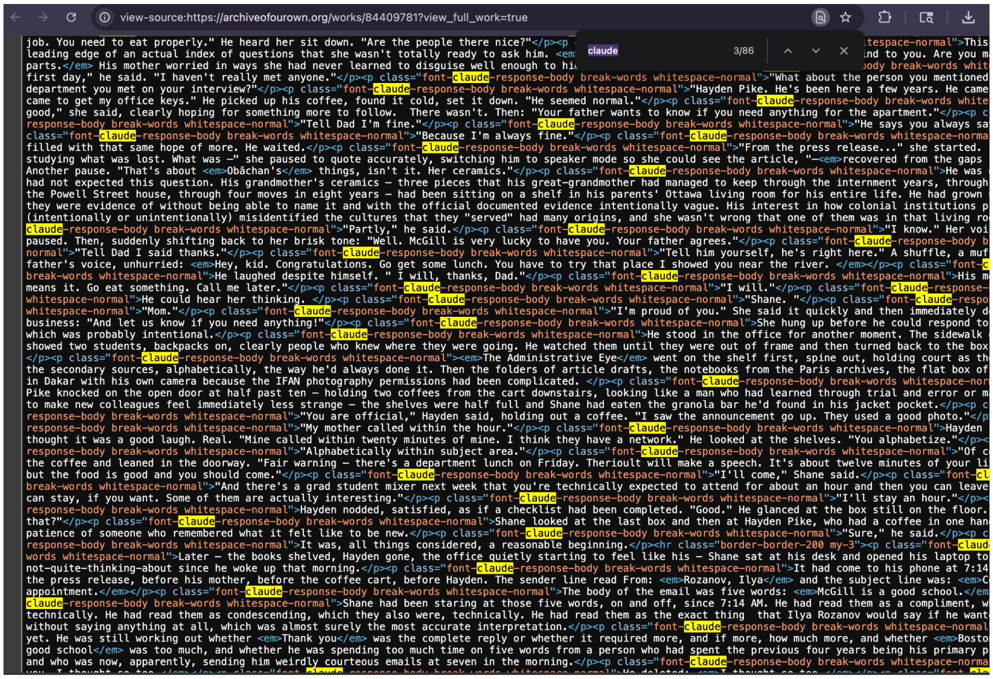
TheLoonlyProfessor, "Revise and Resubmit"
459 kudos, 18,828 hits, 70,773 words (86 instances)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3/86

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job. You need to eat properly." He heard her sit down. "Are the people there nice?"</p><p                            itespace-normal">This
leading edge of an actual index of questions that she wasn't totally ready to ask him. <em                            ind to you. Are you m
parts.</em> His mother worried in ways she had never learned to disguise well enough to hi                            body break-words whit
first day," he said. "I haven't really met anyone."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"What about the person you mentioned
department you met on your interview?"</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Hayden Pike. He's been here a few years. He came
came to get my office keys." He picked up his coffee, found it cold, set it down. "He seemed normal."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words white
good," she said, clearly hoping for something more to follow.  There wasn't. Then: "Your father wants to know if you need anything for the apartment."</p><p c
response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Tell Dad I'm fine."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"He says you always sa
class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Because I'm always fine."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-norma
filled with that same hope of more. He waited.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"From the press release..." she started.
studying what was lost. What was —" she paused to quote accurately, switching him to speaker mode so she could see the article, "—<em>recovered from the gaps
Another pause. "That's about <em>Obāchan's</em> things, isn't it. Her ceramics."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">He was
had not expected this question. His grandmother's ceramics — three pieces that his great-grandmother had managed to keep through the internment years, through
the Powell Street house, through four moves in eight years — had been sitting on a shelf in his parents' Ottawa living room for his entire life. He had grown
they were evidence of without being able to name it and with the official documented evidence intentionally vague. His interest in how colonial institutions p
(intentionally or unintentionally) misidentified the cultures that they "served" had many origins, and she wasn't wrong that one of them was in that living ro
claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Partly," he said.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"I know." Her voi
paused. Then, suddenly shifting back to her brisk tone: "Well. McGill is very lucky to have you. Your father agrees."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body b
normal">"Tell Dad I said thanks."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Tell him yourself, he's right here." A shuffle, a muf
father's voice, unhurried: <em>Hey, kid. Congratulations. Go get some lunch. You have to try that place I showed you near the river. </em></p><p class="font-c
break-words whitespace-normal">He laughed despite himself. " I will, thanks, Dad."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">His m
means it. Go eat something. Call me later."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"I will."</p><p class="font-claude-response-
whitespace-normal">He could hear her thinking. </p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Shane. "</p><p class="font-claude-respo
whitespace-normal">"Mom."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"I'm proud of you." She said it quickly and then immediately d
business: "And let us know if you need anything!"</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">She hung up before he could respond to
which was probably intentional.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">He stood in the office for another moment. The sidewalk
showed two students, backpacks on, clearly people who knew where they were going. He watched them until they were out of frame and then turned back to the box
</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal"><em>The Administrative Eye</em> went on the shelf first, spine out, holding court as th
the secondary sources, alphabetically, the way he'd always done it. Then the folders of article drafts, the notebooks from the Paris archives, the flat box of
in Dakar with his own camera because the IFAN photography permissions had been complicated. </p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-nor
Pike knocked on the open door at half past ten — holding two coffees from the cart downstairs, looking like a man who had learned through trial and error or m
to make new colleagues feel immediately less strange — the shelves were half full and Shane had eaten the granola bar he'd found in his jacket pocket.</p><p c
response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"You are official," Hayden said, holding out a coffee. "I saw the announcement go up. They used a good photo."</p
response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"My mother called within the hour."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Hayden
thought it was a good laugh. Real. "Mine called within twenty minutes of mine. I think they have a network." He looked at the shelves. "You alphabetize."</p><
response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Alphabetically within subject area."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Of c
the coffee and leaned in the doorway. "Fair warning — there's a department lunch on Friday. Therioult will make a speech. It's about twelve minutes of your li
but the food is good and you should come."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"I'll come," Shane said.</p><p class="font-cl
break-words whitespace-normal">"And there's a grad student mixer next week that you're technically expected to attend for about an hour and then you can leave
can stay, if you want. Some of them are actually interesting."</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"I'll stay an hour."</p><
response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Hayden nodded, satisfied, as if a checklist had been completed. "Good." He glanced at the box still on the floor.
that?"</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane looked at the last box and then at Hayden Pike, who had a coffee in one han
patience of someone who remembered what it felt like to be new.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">"Sure," he said.</p><p c
response-body break-words whitespace-normal">It was, all things considered, a reasonable beginning.</p><hr class="border-border-200 my-3"><p class="font-claud
words whitespace-normal">Later — the books shelved, Hayden gone, the office quietly starting to feel like his — Shane sat at his desk and opened his laptop to
not-quite-thinking-about since he woke up that morning.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">It had come to his phone at 7:14
the press release, before his mother, before the coffee cart, before Hayden. The sender line read From: <em>Rozanov, Ilya</em> and the subject line was: <em>C
appointment.</em></p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">The body of the email was five words: <em>McGill is a good school.</em
claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Shane had been staring at those five words, on and off, since 7:14 AM. He had read them as a compliment, w
technically. He had read them as condescending, which they also were, technically. He had read them as the exact thing  that Ilya Rozanov would say if he want
without saying anything at all, which was almost surely the most accurate interpretation.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal
yet. He was still working out whether <em>Thank you</em> was the complete reply or whether it required more, and if more, how much more, and whether <em>Bosto
good school</em> was too much, and whether he was spending too much time on five words from a person who had spent the previous four years being his primary p
and who was now, apparently, sending him weirdly courteous emails at seven in the morning.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-norma
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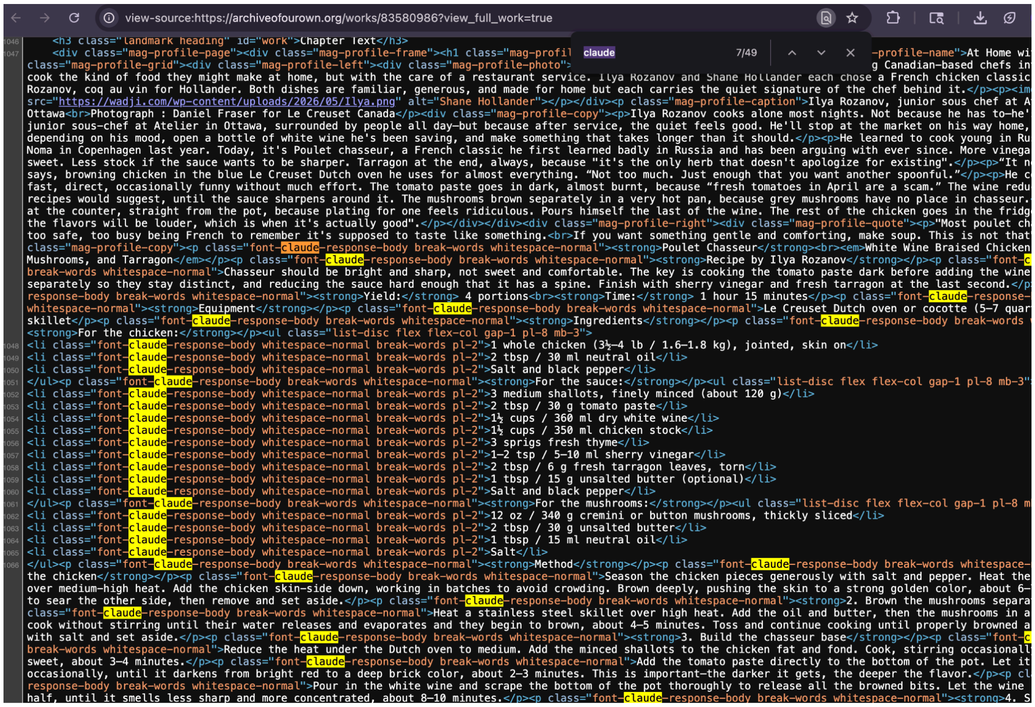
Thelibrarian (Wadjilicious), “[the recipe for staying](https://archiveofourown.org/works/83580986)”

53 kudos, 885 hits, 6,455 words (49 instances)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class="mag-profile-grid"><div class="mag-profile-left"><div class="mag-profile-photo">                    g Canadian-based chefs in
cook the kind of food they might make at home, but with the care of a restaurant service. Ilya Rozanov and Shane Hollander each chose a French chicken classic
Rozanov, coq au vin for Hollander. Both dishes are familiar, generous, and made for home but each carries the quiet signature of the chef behind it.</p><p><im
src="https://wadji.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/Ilya.png" alt="Shane Hollander"></p></div><p class="mag-profile-caption">Ilya Rozanov, junior sous chef at A
Ottawa<br>Photograph : Daniel Fraser for Le Creuset Canada</p><div class="mag-profile-copy"><p>Ilya Rozanov cooks alone most nights. Not because he has to—he'
junior sous-chef at Atelier in Ottawa, surrounded by people all day—but because after service, the quiet feels good. He'll stop at the market on his way home,
depending on his mood, open a bottle of white wine he's been saving, and make something that takes longer than it should.</p><p>He learned to cook young in Ru
Noma in Copenhagen last year. Today, it's Poulet chasseur, a French classic he first learned badly in Russia and has been arguing with ever since. More vinega
sweet. Less stock if the sauce wants to be sharper. Tarragon at the end, always, because "it's the only herb that doesn't apologize for existing".</p><p>“It n
says, browning chicken in the blue Le Creuset Dutch oven he uses for almost everything. “Not too much. Just enough that you want another spoonful.”</p><p>He c
fast, direct, occasionally funny without much effort. The tomato paste goes in dark, almost burnt, because “fresh tomatoes in April are a scam.” The wine redu
recipes would suggest, until the sauce sharpens around it. The mushrooms brown separately in a very hot pan, because grey mushrooms have no place in chasseur.
at the counter, straight from the pot, because plating for one feels ridiculous. Pours himself the last of the wine. The rest of the chicken goes in the fridg
the flavors will be louder, which is when it's actually good".</p></div></div><div class="mag-profile-right"><div class="mag-profile-quote"><p>"Most poulet ch
too safe, too busy being French to remember it's supposed to taste like something.<br>If you want something gentle and comforting, make soup. This is not that
class="mag-profile-copy"><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal"><strong>Poulet Chasseur</strong><br><em>White Wine Braised Chicken
Mushrooms, and Tarragon</em></p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal"><strong>Recipe by Ilya Rozanov</strong></p><p class="font-c
break-words whitespace-normal">Chasseur should be bright and sharp, not sweet and comfortable. The key is cooking the tomato paste dark before adding the wine
separately so they stay distinct, and reducing the sauce hard enough that it has a spine. Finish with sherry vinegar and fresh tarragon at the last second.</p
response-body break-words whitespace-normal"><strong>Yield:</strong> 4 portions<br><strong>Time:</strong> 1 hour 15 minutes</p><p class="font-claude-response-
whitespace-normal"><strong>Equipment</strong></p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Le Creuset Dutch oven or cocotte (5–7 quar
skillet</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal"><strong>Ingredients</strong></p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words 
<strong>For the chicken:</strong></p><ul class="list-disc flex flex-col gap-1 pl-8 mb-3">
<li class="font-claude-response-body whitespace-normal break-words pl-2">1 whole chicken (3½–4 lb / 1.6–1.8 kg), jointed, skin on</li>
<li class="font-claude-response-body whitespace-normal break-words pl-2">2 tbsp / 30 ml neutral oil</li>
<li class="font-claude-response-body whitespace-normal break-words pl-2">Salt and black pepper</li>
</ul><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal"><strong>For the sauce:</strong></p><ul class="list-disc flex flex-col gap-1 pl-8 mb-3"
<li class="font-claude-response-body whitespace-normal break-words pl-2">3 medium shallots, finely minced (about 120 g)</li>
<li class="font-claude-response-body whitespace-normal break-words pl-2">2 tbsp / 30 g tomato paste</li>
<li class="font-claude-response-body whitespace-normal break-words pl-2">1½ cups / 360 ml dry white wine</li>
<li class="font-claude-response-body whitespace-normal break-words pl-2">1½ cups / 350 ml chicken stock</li>
<li class="font-claude-response-body whitespace-normal break-words pl-2">3 sprigs fresh thyme</li>
<li class="font-claude-response-body whitespace-normal break-words pl-2">1–2 tsp / 5–10 ml sherry vinegar</li>
<li class="font-claude-response-body whitespace-normal break-words pl-2">2 tbsp / 6 g fresh tarragon leaves, torn</li>
<li class="font-claude-response-body whitespace-normal break-words pl-2">1 tbsp / 15 g unsalted butter (optional)</li>
<li class="font-claude-response-body whitespace-normal break-words pl-2">Salt and black pepper</li>
</ul><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal"><strong>For the mushrooms:</strong></p><ul class="list-disc flex flex-col gap-1 pl-8 m
<li class="font-claude-response-body whitespace-normal break-words pl-2">12 oz / 340 g cremini or button mushrooms, thickly sliced</li>
<li class="font-claude-response-body whitespace-normal break-words pl-2">2 tbsp / 30 g unsalted butter</li>
<li class="font-claude-response-body whitespace-normal break-words pl-2">1 tbsp / 15 ml neutral oil</li>
<li class="font-claude-response-body whitespace-normal break-words pl-2">Salt</li>
</ul><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal"><strong>Method</strong></p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-
the chicken</strong></p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Season the chicken pieces generously with salt and pepper. Heat the
over medium-high heat. Add the chicken skin-side down, working in batches to avoid crowding. Brown deeply, pushing the skin to a strong golden color, about 6–
to sear the other side, then remove and set aside.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal"><strong>2. Brown the mushrooms separa
class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Heat a stainless steel skillet over high heat. Add the oil and butter, then the mushrooms in a
cook without stirring until their water releases and evaporates and they begin to brown, about 4–5 minutes. Toss and continue cooking until properly browned a
with salt and set aside.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal"><strong>3. Build the chasseur base</strong></p><p class="font-c
break-words whitespace-normal">Reduce the heat under the Dutch oven to medium. Add the minced shallots to the chicken fat and fond. Cook, stirring occasionall
sweet, about 3–4 minutes.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Add the tomato paste directly to the bottom of the pot. Let it
occasionally, until it darkens from bright red to a deep brick color, about 2–3 minutes. This is important—the darker it gets, the deeper the flavor.</p><p cl
response-body break-words whitespace-normal">Pour in the white wine and scrape the bottom of the pot thoroughly to release all the browned bits. Let the wine 
half, until it smells less sharp and more concentrated, about 8–10 minutes.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal"><strong>4. S
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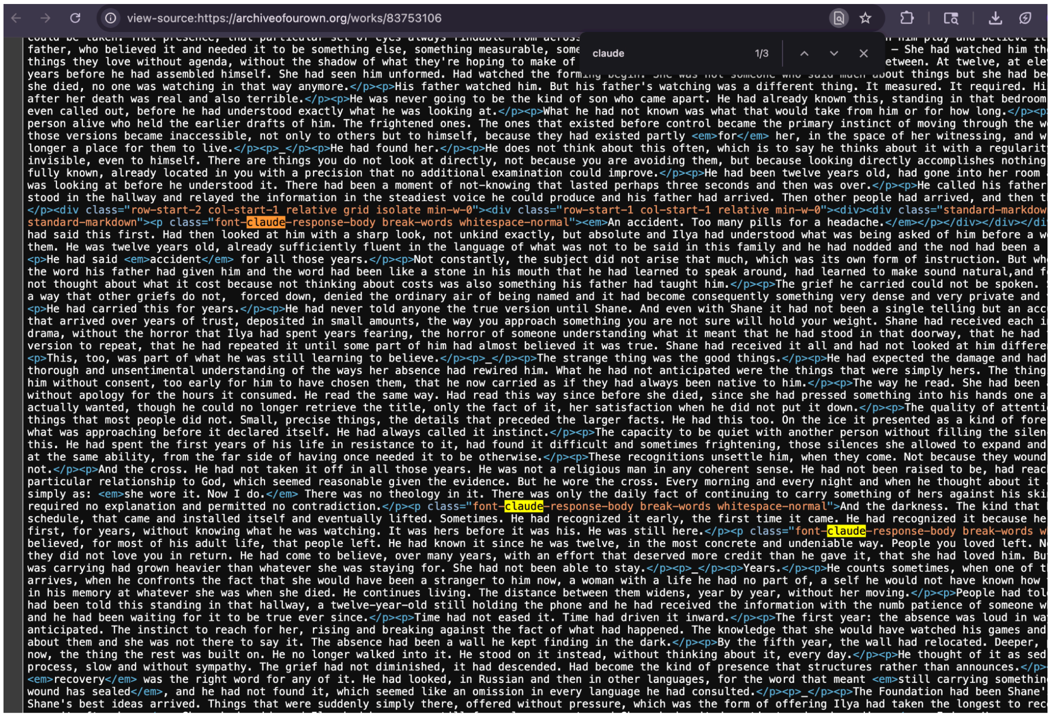
Thelibrarian (Wadjilicious), “[To live in hearts we leave behind](https://archiveofourown.org/works/83753106)”

119 kudos, 1,147 hits, 3,065 words (3 instances)



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father, who believed it and needed it to be something else, something measurable, some                    – She had watched him th
things they love without agenda, without the shadow of what they're hoping to make of                    etween. At twelve, at ele
years before he had assembled himself. She had seen him unformed. Had watched the forming begin. She was not someone who said much about things but she had be
she died, no one was watching in that way anymore.</p><p>His father watched him. But his father's watching was a different thing. It measured. It required. Hi
after her death was real and also terrible.</p><p>He was never going to be the kind of son who came apart. He had already known this, standing in that bedroom
even called out, before he had understood exactly what he was looking at.</p><p>What he had not known was what that would take from him or for how long.</p><p
person alive who held the earlier drafts of him. The frightened ones. The ones that existed before control became the primary instinct of moving through the w
those versions became inaccessible, not only to others but to himself, because they had existed partly <em>for</em> her, in the space of her witnessing, and w
longer a place for them to live.</p><p>_</p><p>He had found her.</p><p>He does not think about this often, which is to say he thinks about it with a regularit
invisible, even to himself. There are things you do not look at directly, not because you are avoiding them, but because looking directly accomplishes nothing
fully known, already located in you with a precision that no additional examination could improve.</p><p>He had been twelve years old, had gone into her room 
was looking at before he understood it. There had been a moment of not-knowing that lasted perhaps three seconds and then was over.</p><p>He called his father
stood in the hallway and relayed the information in the steadiest voice he could produce and his father had arrived. Then other people had arrived, and then t
</p><div class="row-start-2 col-start-1 relative grid isolate min-w-0"><div class="row-start-1 col-start-1 relative min-w-0"><div><div class="standard-markdow
standard-markdown"><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal"><em>An accident. Too many pills for a headache.</em></p></div></div></di
had said this first. Had then looked at him with a sharp look, not unkind exactly, but absolute and Ilya had understood what was being asked of him before a w
them. He was twelve years old, already sufficiently fluent in the language of what was not to be said in this family and he had nodded and the nod had been a 
<p>He had said <em>accident</em> for all those years.</p><p>Not constantly, the subject did not arise that much, which was its own form of instruction. But wh
the word his father had given him and the word had been like a stone in his mouth that he had learned to speak around, had learned to make sound natural,and f
not thought about what it cost because not thinking about costs was also something his father had taught him.</p><p>The grief he carried could not be spoken. 
a way that other griefs do not,  forced down, denied the ordinary air of being named and it had become consequently something very dense and very private and 
<p>He had carried this for years.</p><p>He had never told anyone the true version until Shane. And even with Shane it had not been a single telling but an acc
that arrived over years of trust, deposited in small amounts, the way you approach something you are not sure will hold your weight. Shane had received each i
drama, without the horror that Ilya had spent years fearing, the horror of someone understanding what it meant that he had stood in that doorway, that he had 
version to repeat, that he had repeated it until some part of him had almost believed it was true. Shane had received it all and had not looked at him differe
<p>This, too, was part of what he was still learning to believe.</p><p>_</p><p>The strange thing was the good things.</p><p>He had expected the damage and had
thorough and unsentimental understanding of the ways her absence had rewired him. What he had not anticipated were the things that were simply hers. The thing
him without consent, too early for him to have chosen them, that he now carried as if they had always been native to him.</p><p>The way he read. She had been 
without apology for the hours it consumed. He read the same way. Had read this way since before she died, since she had pressed something into his hands one a
actually wanted, though he could no longer retrieve the title, only the fact of it, her satisfaction when he did not put it down.</p><p>The quality of attenti
things that most people did not. Small, precise things, the details that preceded the larger facts. He had this too. On the ice it presented as a kind of fore
what was approaching before it declared itself. He had always called it instinct.</p><p>The capacity to be quiet with another person without filling the silen
this. He had spent the first years of his life in resistance to it, had found it difficult and sometimes frightening, those silences she allowed to expand and
at the same ability, from the far side of having once needed it to be otherwise.</p><p>These recognitions unsettle him, when they come. Not because they wound
not.</p><p>And the cross. He had not taken it off in all those years. He was not a religious man in any coherent sense. He had not been raised to be, had reac
particular relationship to God, which seemed reasonable given the evidence. But he wore the cross. Every morning and every night and when he thought about it 
simply as: <em>she wore it. Now I do.</em> There was no theology in it. There was only the daily fact of continuing to carry something of hers against his ski
required no explanation and permitted no contradiction.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">And the darkness. The kind that 
schedule, that came and installed itself and eventually lifted. Sometimes. He had recognized it early, the first time it came. He had recognized it because he
first, for years, without knowing what he was watching. It was hers before it was his. He was still here.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words w
believed, for most of his adult life, that people left. He had known it since he was twelve, in the most concrete and undeniable way. People you loved left. N
they did not love you in return. He had come to believe, over many years, with an effort that deserved more credit than he gave it, that she had loved him. Bu
was carrying had grown heavier than whatever she was staying for. She had not been able to stay.</p><p>_</p><p>Years.</p><p>He counts sometimes, when one of t
arrives, when he confronts the fact that she would have been a stranger to him now, a woman with a life he had no part of, a self he would not have known how 
in his memory at whatever she was when she died. He continues living. The distance between them widens, year by year, without her moving.</p><p>People had tol
had been told this standing in that hallway, a twelve-year-old still holding the phone and he had received the information with the numb patience of someone w
and he had been waiting for it to be true ever since.</p><p>Time had not eased it. Time had driven it inward.</p><p>The first year: the absence was loud in wa
anticipated. The instinct to reach for her, rising and breaking against the fact of what had happened. The knowledge that she would have watched his games and
about them and she was not there to say it. The absence had been a wall he kept finding in the dark.</p><p>By the fifth year, the wall had relocated. Deeper, 
now, the thing the rest was built on. He no longer walked into it. He stood on it instead, without thinking about it, every day.</p><p>He thought of it as sed
process, slow and without sympathy. The grief had not diminished, it had descended. Had become the kind of presence that structures rather than announces.</p>
<em>recovery</em> was the right word for any of it. He had looked, in Russian and then in other languages, for the word that meant <em>still carrying somethin
wound has sealed</em>, and he had not found it, which seemed like an omission in every language he had consulted.</p><p>_</p><p>The Foundation had been Shane'
Shane's best ideas arrived. Things that were suddenly simply there, offered without pressure, which was the form of offering Ilya had taken the longest to rec
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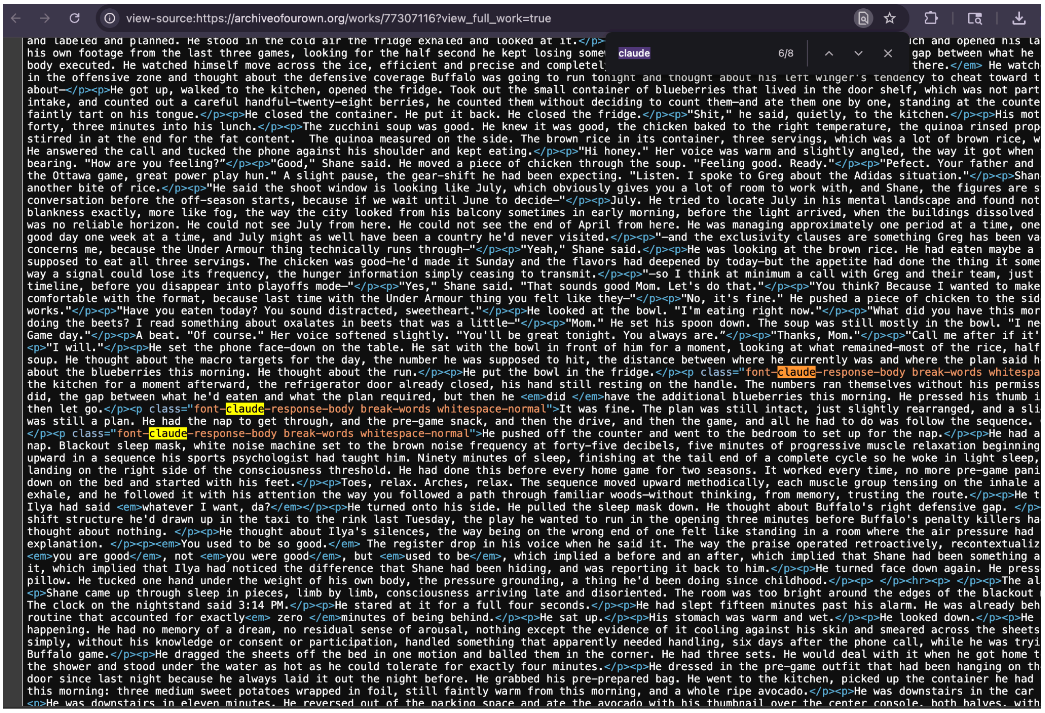
unseemlyndisturbed, “Lightweight canadian”
1,403 kudos, 89,479 hits, 269,193 words (8 instances)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claude
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and labeled and planned. He stood in the cold air the fridge exhaled and looked at it.</p>          ich and opened his la
his own footage from the last three games, looking for the half second he kept losing some          gap between what he
body executed. He watched himself move across the ice, efficient and precise and complete           there.</em> He watch
in the offensive zone and thought about the defensive coverage Buffalo was going to run tonight and thought about his left winger's tendency to cheat toward t
about—</p><p>He got up, walked to the kitchen, opened the fridge. Took out the small container of blueberries that lived in the door shelf, which was not part
intake, and counted out a careful handful—twenty-eight berries, he counted them without deciding to count them—and ate them one by one, standing at the counte
faintly tart on his tongue.</p><p>He closed the container. He put it back. He closed the fridge.</p><p>"Shit," he said, quietly, to the kitchen.</p><p>His mot
forty, three minutes into his lunch.</p><p>The zucchini soup was good. He knew it was good, the chicken baked to the right temperature, the quinoa rinsed prop
stirred in at the end for the fat content.  The quinoa measured on the side. The brown rice in its container, three servings, which was a lot of brown rice, w
He answered the call and tucked the phone against his shoulder and kept eating.</p><p>"Hi honey." Her voice was warm and slightly angled, the way it got when
bearing. "How are you feeling?”</p><p>"Good," Shane said. He moved a piece of chicken through the soup. "Feeling good. Ready."</p><p>"Pefect. Your father and
the Ottawa game, great power play hun." A slight pause, the gear-shift he had been expecting. "Listen. I spoke to Greg about the Adidas situation."</p><p>Shan
another bite of rice.</p><p>"He said the shoot window is looking like July, which obviously gives you a lot of room to work with, and Shane, the figures are s
conversation before the off-season starts, because if we wait until June to decide—"</p><p>July. He tried to locate July in his mental landscape and found not
blankness exactly, more like fog, the way the city looked from his balcony sometimes in early morning, before the light arrived, when the buildings dissolved
was no reliable horizon. He could not see July from here. He could not see the end of April from here. He was managing approximately one period at a time, one
good day one week at a time, and July might as well have been a country he'd never visited.</p><p>"—and the exclusivity clauses are something Greg has been va
concerns me, because the Under Armour thing technically runs through—"</p><p>"Yeah," Shane said.</p><p>He was looking at the brown rice. He had eaten maybe a
supposed to eat all three servings. The chicken was good—he'd made it Sunday and the flavors had deepened by today—but the appetite had done the thing it some
way a signal could lose its frequency, the hunger information simply ceasing to transmit.</p><p>"—so I think at minimum a call with Greg and their team, just
timeline, before you disappear into playoffs mode—"</p><p>"Yes," Shane said. "That sounds good Mom. Let's do that."</p><p>"You think? Because I wanted to make
comfortable with the format, because last time with the Under Armour thing you felt like they—"</p><p>"No, it's fine." He pushed a piece of chicken to the sid
works."</p><p>"Have you eaten today? You sound distracted, sweetheart."</p><p>He looked at the bowl. "I'm eating right now."</p><p>"What did you have this mor
doing the beets? I read something about oxalates in beets that was a little—"</p><p>"Mom." He set his spoon down. The soup was still mostly in the bowl. "I ne
Game day."</p><p>A beat. "Of course." Her voice softened slightly. "You'll be great tonight. You always are.”</p><p>"Thanks, Mom."</p><p>"Call me after if it'
<p>"I will."</p><p>He set the phone face-down on the table. He sat with the bowl in front of him for a moment, looking at what remained—most of the rice, half
soup. He thought about the macro targets for the day, the number he was supposed to hit, the distance between where he currently was and where the plan said h
about the blueberries this morning. He thought about the run.</p><p>He put the bowl in the fridge.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespa
the kitchen for a moment afterward, the refrigerator door already closed, his hand still resting on the handle. The numbers ran themselves without his permiss
did, the gap between what he'd eaten and what the plan required, but then he <em>did </em>have the additional blueberries this morning. He pressed his thumb i
then let go.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">It was fine. The plan was still intact, just slightly rearranged, and a sli
was still a plan. He had the nap to get through, and the pre-game snack, and then the drive, and then the game, and all he had to do was follow the sequence.
</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal">He pushed off the counter and went to the bedroom to set up for the nap.</p><p>He had a
nap. Blackout sleep mask, white noise machine set to the brown noise frequency at forty-five decibels, five minutes of progressive muscle relaxation beginning
upward in a sequence his sports psychologist had taught him. Ninety minutes of sleep, finishing at the tail end of a complete cycle so he woke in light sleep,
landing on the right side of the consciousness threshold. He had done this before every home game for two seasons. It worked every time, no more pre-game pani
down on the bed and started with his feet.</p><p>Toes, relax. Arches, relax. The sequence moved upward methodically, each muscle group tensing on the inhale a
exhale, and he followed it with his attention the way you followed a path through familiar woods—without thinking, from memory, trusting the route.</p><p>He t
Ilya had said <em>whatever I want, da?</em></p><p>He turned onto his side. He pulled the sleep mask down. He thought about Buffalo's right defensive gap. </p>
shift structure he'd drawn up in the taxi to the rink last Tuesday, the play he wanted to run in the opening three minutes before Buffalo's penalty killers ha
thought about nothing. </p><p>He thought about Ilya's silences, the way being on the wrong end of one felt like standing in a room where the air pressure had
explanation. </p><p><em>You used to be so good.</em> The register drop in his voice when he said it. The way the praise operated retroactively, recontextualiz
<em>you are good</em>, not <em>you were good</em>, but <em>used to be</em>, which implied a before and an after, which implied that Shane had been something a
it, which implied that Ilya had noticed the difference that Shane had been hiding, and was reporting it back to him.</p><p>He turned face down again. He press
pillow. He tucked one hand under the weight of his own body, the pressure grounding, a thing he'd been doing since childhood.</p><p> </p><hr><p> </p><p>The al
<p>Shane came up through sleep in pieces, limb by limb, consciousness arriving late and disoriented. The room was too bright around the edges of the blackout
The clock on the nightstand said 3:14 PM.</p><p>He stared at it for a full four seconds.</p><p>He had slept fifteen minutes past his alarm. He was already beh
routine that accounted for exactly<em> zero </em>minutes of being behind.</p><p>He sat up.</p><p>His stomach was warm and wet.</p><p>He looked down.</p><p>He
happening. He had no memory of a dream, no residual sense of arousal, nothing except the evidence of it cooling against his skin and smeared across the sheets
simply, without his knowledge or consent or participation, handled something that apparently needed handling, six days after the phone call, while he was tryi
Buffalo game.</p><p>He dragged the sheets off the bed in one motion and balled them in the corner. He had three sets. He would deal with it when he got home t
the shower and stood under the water as hot as he could tolerate for exactly four minutes.</p><p>He dressed in the pre-game outfit that had been hanging on th
door since last night because he always laid it out the night before. He grabbed his pre-prepared bag. He went to the kitchen, picked up the container he had
this morning: three medium sweet potatoes wrapped in foil, still faintly warm from this morning, and a whole ripe avocado.</p><p>He was downstairs in the car
<p>He was downstairs in eleven minutes. He reversed out of the parking space and ate the avocado with his thumbnail over the center console, both halves, with
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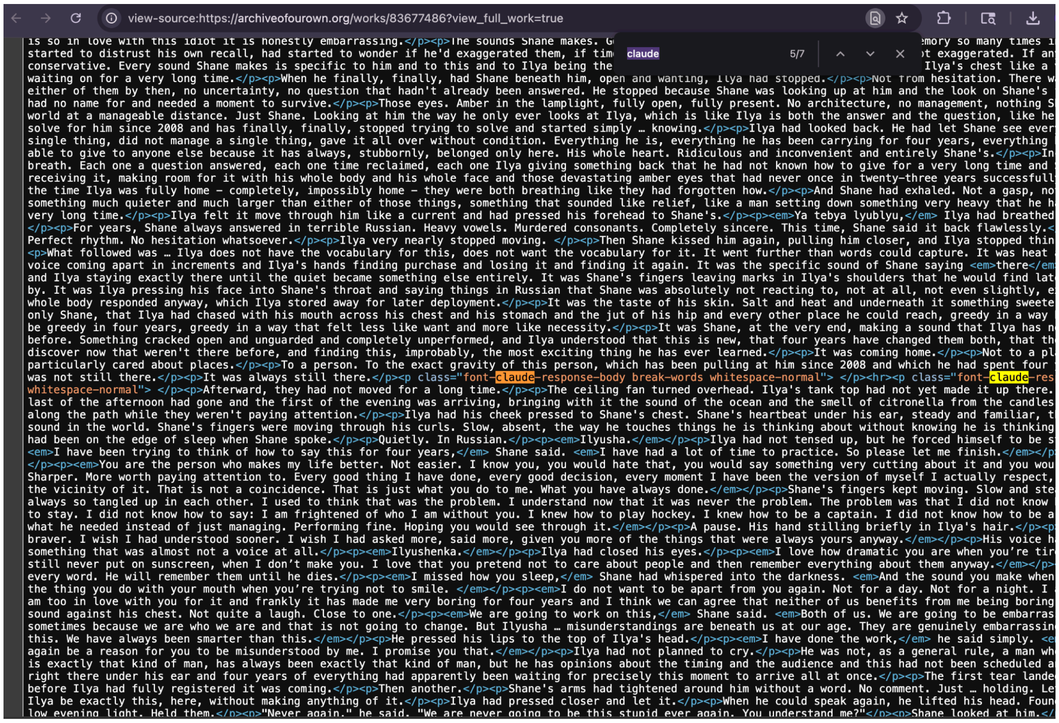
Zavia, “Just Another Day In Paradise” (*which also includes an undeniably AI-generated cover image*)
1,589 kudos, 56,389 hits, 136,871 words (7 instances)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is so in love with this idiot it is honestly embarrassing.</p><p>The sounds Shane makes. G          emory so many times i
started to distrust his own recall, had started to wonder if he'd exaggerated them, if tim          ot exaggerated. If an
conservative. Every sound Shane makes is specific to him and to this and to Ilya being the          Ilya's chest like a
waiting on for a very long time.</p><p>When he finally, finally, had Shane beneath him, open and wanting, Ilya had stopped.</p><p>Not from hesitation. There w
either of them by then, no uncertainty, no question that hadn't already been answered. He stopped because Shane was looking up at him and the look on Shane's
had no name for and needed a moment to survive.</p><p>Those eyes. Amber in the lamplight, fully open, fully present. No architecture, no management, nothing S
world at a manageable distance. Just Shane. Looking at him the way he only ever looks at Ilya, which is like Ilya is both the answer and the question, like he
solve for him since 2008 and has finally, finally, stopped trying to solve and started simply … knowing.</p><p>Ilya had looked back. He had let Shane see ever
single thing, did not manage a single thing, gave it all over without condition. Everything he is, everything he has been carrying for four years, everything
able to give to anyone else because it has always, stubbornly, belonged only here. His whole heart. Ridiculous and inconvenient and entirely Shane's.</p><p>In
breath. Each one a question answered, each one time reclaimed, each one Ilya giving something back that he had not known how to give for a very long time and
receiving it, making room for it with his whole body and his whole face and those devastating amber eyes that had never once in twenty-three years successfull
the time Ilya was fully home – completely, impossibly home – they were both breathing like they had forgotten how.</p><p>And Shane had exhaled. Not a gasp, no
something much quieter and much larger than either of those things, something that sounded like relief, like a man setting down something very heavy that he h
very long time.</p><p>Ilya felt it move through him like a current and had pressed his forehead to Shane's.</p><p><em>Ya tebya lyublyu,</em> Ilya had breathed
</p><p>For years, Shane always answered in terrible Russian. Heavy vowels. Murdered consonants. Completely sincere. This time, Shane said it back flawlessly.<
Perfect rhythm. No hesitation whatsoever.</p><p>Ilya very nearly stopped moving. </p><p>Then Shane kissed him again, pulling him closer, and Ilya stopped thin
<p>What followed was … Ilya does not have the vocabulary for this, does not want the vocabulary for it. It went further than words could capture. It was heat
voice coming apart in increments and Ilya's hands finding purchase and losing it and finding it again. It was the specific sound of Shane saying <em>there</em
and Ilya staying exactly there until the quiet became something else entirely. It was Shane's fingers leaving marks in Ilya's shoulders that he would find lat
by. It was Ilya pressing his face into Shane's throat and saying things in Russian that Shane was absolutely not reacting to, not at all, not even slightly, e
whole body responded anyway, which Ilya stored away for later deployment.</p><p>It was the taste of his skin. Salt and heat and underneath it something sweete
only Shane, that Ilya had chased with his mouth across his chest and his stomach and the jut of his hip and every other place he could reach, greedy in a way
be greedy in four years, greedy in a way that felt less like want and more like necessity.</p><p>It was Shane, at the very end, making a sound that Ilya has n
before. Something cracked open and unguarded and completely unperformed, and Ilya understood that this is new, that four years have changed them both, that th
discover now that weren't there before, and finding this, improbably, the most exciting thing he has ever learned.</p><p>It was coming home.</p><p>Not to a pl
particularly cared about places.</p><p>To a person. To the exact gravity of this person, which has been pulling at him since 2008 and which he had spent four
was not still there.</p><p>It was always still there.</p><p class="font-claude-response-body break-words whitespace-normal"> </p><hr><p class="font-claude-res
whitespace-normal"> </p><p>Afterward, they had not moved for a long time.</p><p>The ceiling fan turned overhead. Ilya's tank top had not yet made it up there.
last of the afternoon had gone and the first of the evening was arriving, bringing with it the sound of the ocean and the smell of citronella from the candles
along the path while they weren't paying attention.</p><p>Ilya had his cheek pressed to Shane's chest. Shane's heartbeat under his ear, steady and familiar, t
sound in the world. Shane's fingers were moving through his curls. Slow, absent, the way he touches things he is thinking about without knowing he is thinking
had been on the edge of sleep when Shane spoke.</p><p>Quietly. In Russian.</p><p><em>Ilyusha.</em></p><p>Ilya had not tensed up, but he forced himself to be s
<em>I have been trying to think of how to say this for four years,</em> Shane said. <em>I have had a lot of time to practice. So please let me finish.</em></p
</p><p><em>You are the person who makes my life better. Not easier. I know you, you would hate that, you would say something very cutting about it and you wou
Sharper. More worth paying attention to. Every good thing I have done, every good decision, every moment I have been the version of myself I actually respect,
the vicinity of it. That is not a coincidence. That is just what you do to me. What you have always done.</em></p><p>Shane's fingers kept moving. Slow and ste
always so tangled up in each other. I used to think that was the problem. I understand now that it was never the problem. The problem was that I did not know
to stay. I did not know how to say: I am frightened of who I am without you. I knew how to play hockey. I knew how to be a captain. I did not know how to be a
what he needed instead of just managing. Performing fine. Hoping you would see through it.</em></p><p>A pause. His hand stilling briefly in Ilya's hair.</p><p
braver. I wish I had understood sooner. I wish I had asked more, said more, given you more of the things that were always yours anyway.</em></p><p>His voice h
something that was almost not a voice at all.</p><p><em>Ilyushenka.</em></p><p>Ilya had closed his eyes.</p><p><em>I love how dramatic you are when you’re tir
still never put on sunscreen, when I don’t make you. I love that you pretend not to care about people and then remember everything about them anyway.</em></p>
every word. He will remember them until he dies.</p><p><em>I missed how you sleep,</em> Shane had whispered into the darkness. <em>And the sound you make when
the thing you do with your mouth when you’re trying not to smile. </em></p><p><em>I do not want to be apart from you again. Not for a day. Not for a night. I
am too in love with you for it and frankly it has made me very boring for four years and I think we can agree that neither of us benefits from me being boring
sound against his chest. Not quite a laugh. Close to one.</p><p><em>We are going to work on this,</em> Shane said. <em>Both of us. We are going to be embarras
sometimes because we are who we are and that is not going to change. But Ilyusha … misunderstandings are beneath us at our age. They are genuinely embarrassin
this. We have always been smarter than this.</em></p><p>He pressed his lips to the top of Ilya's head.</p><p><em>I have done the work,</em> he said simply. <e
again be a reason for you to be misunderstood by me. I promise you that.</em></p><p>Ilya had not planned to cry.</p><p>He was not, as a general rule, a man wh
is exactly that kind of man, has always been exactly that kind of man, but he has opinions about the timing and the audience and this had not been scheduled a
right there under his ear and four years of everything had apparently been waiting for precisely this moment to arrive all at once.</p><p>The first tear lande
before Ilya had fully registered it was coming.</p><p>Then another.</p><p>Shane's arms had tightened around him without a word. No comment. Just … holding. Le
Ilya be exactly this, here, without making anything of it.</p><p>Ilya had pressed closer and let it.</p><p>When he could speak again, he lifted his head. Foun
low evening light. Held them.</p><p>"Never again," he said. "We are never going to be this stupid ever again. You understand me?"</p><p>Shane looked at him.</
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